Views of Dante

By E. L. RIVARD, C. S. V.

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VIEWS OF DANTE

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
RT. REV. J. L. SPALDING, D. D.
BISHOP OF PEORIA, ILL.

"I think that a young Catholic's studies should be limited to the great masters, such as Milton, Dante, Shakespeare, Wordsworth; and to such poets and essayists in modern times as have written for the edification, not the deterioration, of their fellow beings."—*Father Sheehan.*

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INTRODUCTION.

TO READ DANTE IS A DUTY, TO RE-READ HIM A NEED, TO UNDERSTAND HIM A PLEDGE AND PRINCIPLE OF GREATNESS. —*Tomasséo.*

He who leads us to know and love a genuine book, one in which the spirit of a high and brave man breathes, vital and immortal, does us a service beyond the power of thankfulness. He enriches our life with a friend who can never annoy or betray or desert; who shall ask no reward other than the enlargement and emancipation which he brings. He provides us with a refuge from care and trouble, with a solace in affliction, with employment that makes leisure pleasant and profitable, with a companion who when we are lonely or despondent or abandoned cheers us with great thoughts, and, as by magic, evokes the noblest and most heroic souls to utter for us again the truth by which they lived and to

re-enact the parts they played in the world's drama. It is the purpose of education to bring the young into conscious, sympathetic communion not only with the best that is known, but even more with the greatest and noblest who have lived. The true teacher is a hero-worshipper, whose enthusiam impels him to communicate the light and fire of his admiration and love to his pupils; and since men of genius re-live for us most vitally in the words they utter, it is the teacher's business to make his disciples acquainted with the books wherein they have made record of the beauty which illumined them, and of the truth by which they were strengthened. Their winged words bear from age to age on their tireless pinions the fine essence of the world's purest wisdom. From every land—from India, Persia, Palestine, Greece or Rome, as from the regions made illustrious by the modern mind—these immortal messengers spring forth, and they who strive with earnestness and perseverance are made aware of the good tidings they bring, and little by little become capable of understanding something of the infinite worth

and joy there is in pure truth clothed in perfect beauty. Of old the poet and the prophet were one, and in all times the great poets are the great teachers. Their utterances sink into the hearts and memories of men. They nourish the flame of intellectual light, which, like that of a lamp, must be fed, or it will fail and die.

They reveal God and the world to man, and man to himself. The educational value of poetry is the highest, greater than that of history or science or than any other knowledge which deals with mere facts and theories. The poet's inspiration is the result of the thrill with which the vision of truth's splendor causes his whole being to vibrate in unison with worlds which are all alive with God's presence and glory. He utters in his song what he feels, forebodes, believes, loves and longs for; and the facts of sense he, by his creative power, transforms, giving to them everlasting significance and charm. His appeal is not to the one or the other faculty, but to the whole man, and to know and understand him is to follow and love him, so long as "hope remaining bears her verdant bloom." With him

we visit spheres veiled from mortal eye, and learn to build within a kingdom which, while consciousness abides, cannot pass away. He invites us to approach, not with the promise of pleasure, but to be illumined, strengthened and warned. His task is priestlike. He points to Heaven. In sweetest words he speaks holiest truth, opening for it entrance into our hearts and giving it a fixed seat in our memories. His voice is deeper and tenderer than that of other men and the emotions he stirs are purer and more lasting. That to which he points he gives us the power to see. Nothing he teaches can remain commonplace or unimportant. His judgments are final. His sentence is irrevocable. His approval confers imperishable fame. If he bid us but look and pass by, forgetfulness is impossible. The morality which others teach in cold and formal phrase, he uplights with an inextinguishable glow. He makes us feel that poetry is religion and that science cannot impart its full and perfect meaning so long as its facts have not been fused in the poetic mind.

To learn to take delight in the study of a great poet is as difficult as to acquire a taste and passion for the study of philosophy.

Anyone may do what all the world is doing—may read newspapers, magazines and novels, and continue to be shallow, heedless, ignorant and vulgar. But he who, led by faith, aspiration and desire, has painfully and patiently wrought his way into the mind and heart of a great thinker and writer, emerges at last from a world of darkness and imprisonment into regions of light and liberty. Long and loving communion with a strong and exalted soul has given him a touch of magnanimity and courage. He has been made aware of his kinship with the highest and has insight into the truth that no good fortune is so precious as that whose issue is enlargement and purification of the spirit which is a man's self. He is forever grateful that strength was given him to turn from cheap pleasures and common success, that, led by the counsels of the wise and trust in the intimations of his own conscience, he might, through toil and hardship, make himself a not

unfit companion of the best who have thought and loved and so acquire the diviner mind, the heroic temper, the generous heart which enable a man to dwell where what he lives by becomes all the more his own, the more it is diffused and partaken of by others.

In going forth from the low-vaulted habitation of his earlier years into strange and unknown regions, he finds that his wanderings have been heaven directed, and that he has been guided to a land of promise, more gracious and beautiful than aught his youthful fancy had bodied forth.

To have a genuine admiration and love for a true poet is to possess the secret of intellectual and moral culture; and since the imparting of this secret is a chief part of the teacher's business, his success can be but partial if he failed to bring his pupils into vital growing contact with one or more of the creative minds that have married their thoughts to perfect words.

It is the teacher's instinct in Dr. Rivard that has impelled him to write these essays on Dante, the supreme poet, who rose with

mighty and untiring flight from the human to the divine, from transitory things to those which abide forever, until he looked with steadfast gaze on the splendors of truth, enkindled along the stairway of the Eternal palace; and from that height turning, beheld this globe and smiled at its ignoble semblance. He fashioned the language into which he poured his high and solemn thoughts. All the tragedies, martyrdoms, heroisms, ecstasies, yearnings, strivings, conflicts and triumphs of a thousand years take shape within his brain and issue forth again to become a permanent possession. The sun upwheeling from the night does not bring out the myriad forms of earth in more distinct and vivid outline and color than he paints the shadowy regions and the disembodied spirits who when he looks appear and reveal secrets which fill us with horror or hope or love.

For centuries no voice of supreme power and compass had broken on the world, listening for other sounds than the clash of arms and the disputation of vain or angry men. Sublime and holy things had been suffered

and wrought. On the ruins of a fallen empire new states had been built; the barbarous hordes had settled about the spires that bore the cross; pagan indulgence and despair had given place to the hope which through the grave pierces to the eternal fountain head of being where life is Lord of Death forevermore. A new view of the universe, of God, of man and of nature, had disclosed itself, new languages had been evolved, a new civilization had come into existence.

Throughout Europe there was but one form of religious faith and practice, but one Church, whose central seat of authority and rule had been set up in Rome by the Apostle to whom Christ had entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

A new Empire had risen, whose purpose was supposed to be to bring about and enforce harmony and peace among the many states, principalities and peoples into which Christendom was divided, and to co-operate with the Church to make truth and righteousness prevail.

"Progress once begun," says Professor Norton, "became rapid, and the twelfth century is one of the most splendid periods of the intellectual life of man, expressing itself in an infinite variety of noble and attractive forms."

Great saints had lived, great doctors had taught, great artists had wrought, great popes and emperors had ruled, and the impetus continued into succeeding centuries. In Italy especially, in the thirteenth, despite the bitter interminable struggles between Guelphs and Ghibellines, there was immense physical and moral energy, an ardent, if narrow, patriotism, and a deep earnest longing and striving for the things of the spirit. Nothing was believed to be impossible to the human mind and will. In her Republics there was an intensity and joyousness in thinking and doing such as were found at Athens in her golden age. Genuine religious faith was not deemed to be incompatible with a vast intellectual curiosity. Philosophers, warriors, poets, saints, architects and painters commingled in generous rivalry, or, joining the fac-

tions by which the land was torn, contended for the mastery. The social and political influence of woman was growing.

"The elements and fragments of poetry," says Dean Church, "were everywhere in the Church—in her ideas of life, in her rules and institutions for passing through it, in her preparation for death, in her offices, ceremonial, celebrations, usages, her consecration of domestic, literary, commercial, civic, military, political life, the meanings and ends she had given them, the religious seriousness with which the forms of each were dignified in her doctrine and her dogmatic system, her dependence on the unseen world, her Bible."

Never has life been more interesting, more varied, rich and strong, more eager for freedom and enlargement, more informed by faith in the infinite nature of man's character and will, more confident that the chaotic elements shall be subdued into a world of beauty and goodness. And now the poet rises to weave the myriad tangled threads into firm and enduring texture, to reduce all harsh, discordant sounds to sweet music, to take into his

own mind and heart all this mighty, battling, growing world, to re-create and re-clothe it in forms of truth and light, in the loftiest, the deepest, the most comprehensive of poems, all athrill with utterances which hold the substance of the highest and holiest that the soul can believe or hope for or love. He has not been an idle spectator or a mere dreamer. He has fought sword in hand against the foes of his city, in whose government he has held office and played a leading part. In the midst of the cares and responsibilities of active life he has been a persistent reader of great books, a ponderer of the eternal problems which never cease to haunt the noblest minds. For him the unseen world is more real than this which appears. He sees farther than Homer or Shakespeare, piercing through the show of things to the core of being. In the midst of the tumult and hate by which he is surrounded, he feels the eternal will working for the victory of righteousness and love. Conscience is the boon companion that bids him on and fear not. Patriotism and religion

are for him a single passion working to one end. Compared with him Shakespeare is a barbarian whose chief delight is in the spectacle of life, in its pomp and splendor and noise, in the world-wide tragi-comedy; and, as he says of himself, his mind is subdued to what it works in. His surpassing gifts excite ceaseless admiration and wonder, but his personality makes no impression. His wit is coarse, his eloquence rhetorical, his philosophy commonplace; and even when he gives expression to the sweetest and purest wisdom we are tempted to doubt whether it be not a mere phrase. He fails to produce the profoundest and most durable emotion, however much he delight or horrify. There is doubtless a whole world in which he reigns sovereign lord, and it is hard to be grateful enough for the services he renders. In his comedies, however, there is too much banter and vulgarity, and at the close of his tragedies nothing remains, as Ruskin says, but dead march and clothes of burial; no far-off sound of a divine triumph, and a glory as of resurrection. Yet he, too, whatever his

religion or religious indifference may have been, is like Dante, the poet of the marvelous middle age, with all its heroic battlings, with all its fierce and lawless passion, with all its wealth of faith and devotion. In his heroines above all his inspiration is Christian. The thought of the unseen eternal is not absent nor the recognition of the decisive force of conduct, but for him fate rather than providence is the power that makes or mars the lives of men. Mere accidental nothings lead on to final inevitable ruin, to the bourne from which no traveler returns. The world of sense, the little stage whereon the player struts his brief hour, is the home he knows and loves. What may be beyond is shadowy, unsubstantial, and the baseless fabric of a dream.

For Dante the unseen world is not less real than the earth on which we stand. That in us which is essential, vital and enduring is spiritual. The visible universe is but the manifestation of the infinite Spirit, for whom space and time widen into an everlasting here and now. To know this is to know that the soul is immortal, still self-conscious, though

it sink into hell or be uplifted to heaven. Even here and now it is deathless, and by its free choice fixes its everlasting fate. The clear, far-reaching insight into this truth makes Dante the most serious, the most intense, the most creative of poets. He is first of all a moralist, and his aim is to teach that righteousness is life, and that life is light and love. "But," as Lowell says, "the most picturesque of poets could not escape his genius, and his sermon sings and glows and charms in a manner that surprises more at the fiftieth reading than the first, such variety of freshness is in imagination." At the first reading, indeed, he is more apt to repel than to attract, he must himself create the taste by which he can be appreciated. We must learn to love him before we can know him. His symbolic beasts, and others not less dreadful to those who would live in the things of the mind, forbid ascent up the sacred mountain, unless some spirit or living man place himself at our side and lead us on. Intellectual and moral progress is a process of self-estrangement and self-abandonment. We

must seem to lose ourselves before we may hope to live in the true self, we must turn from the paths which custom has made smooth and plain, be content to forego the pleasures which satisfy the vulgar; like Dante, must consent to wander through inhospitable lands, a pilgrim, a beggar, climbing the stairs of others and eating bread made salt by tears. But few hearken to the divine call or taste the bliss there is in contemplation and in love, because the most are overcome by doubt and fear, by desire for mere success and sensual delights, or, yielding to indolence and avarice, live without or praise or blame, for themselves only. "Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by."

Dante, the greatest of poets, is the least popular, but the most worthy of the study of serious and aspiring minds. And after all is it not to such minds alone that appeal is made not in vain?

The frivolous, the heedless, the indifferent, the lovers of sport, the seekers for what provides a livelihood, issue forth from college and university, unraised and unillumined. For

them there is no teacher, no quickener of thought, no revealer of power; and for them no divine poet sings. For his spheral music they have no ear; and to get full view of the truth he makes known they have not the will nor the heart to plunge through the veil of flame.

Never breathed there more passionate worshipper of heroic greatness and goodness than Dante, and to understand and love him, to be uplifted and purified by his spiritual force, to take him for guide and companion through the eternal world created by the free acts of immortal souls, one must have something of his lofty mood and godlike purpose. But the task set me is not to write a treatise on the first and greatest Christian poet, but rather to call attention to the book in which Dr. Rivard has made a serious study of this most fruitful subject.

As a teacher of philosophy in one of our colleges he was early drawn to the poet who has clothed the profoundest and the most exalted truth in perfect words, giving to the invisible realities which are the substance

of our being the definiteness, the color and the charm which make the things of the senses intelligible and beautiful. The help which he as a teacher and student has derived from his intimate acquaintance with the creative mind of Italy's noblest son, has made him eager to persuade others to fit themselves, by patient effort and pure life, to know and love the supreme poet, the loftiest spirit who has ever clothed himself in verbal vesture, who from that truth which bears even the semblance of a lie forbids his tongue, who sees the worst and the best that may befall and sees that God is righteousness and love, who leads where one's own will may become safe guide, investing with crown and mitre, sovereign over himself, "by the love impelled, that moves the sun in heaven and all the stars."

JOHN LANCASTER SPALDING,
Bishop of Peoria.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The contents of the present volume are a collection of short addresses delivered before classes of literary criticism for the purpose of leading the students to a clearer understanding and a higher appreciation of the literary and moral values of the Divine Comedy. As these familiar talks aroused among the hearers a genuine interest in the difficult study of Dante, they were, for larger convenience, published in *Mosher's Magazine*, now the *Champlain Educator*, the organ of our Catholic Summer Schools and Reading Circles. The reasons for their republication in the present form are: the hearty welcome first accorded them by the public, and especially the valued estimate set upon their educational usefulness by such scholars as Dr. Thomas O'Hagan, Rev. J. Cavanaugh, C. S. C., and Father Sheehan. These brief essays are sent forth in the hope that they may serve, if not as a guide, at least as an alpenstock, to the brave youths who would scale the Dantean heights. For the convenience of literary classes and Reading Circles there has been added a chapter of suggestions and outlines of subjects for treatment by students.

I am deeply grateful to Rt. Rev. Bishop Spalding for his scholarly Introduction, and I sincerely trust that his kindling words may, like sparks fallen from "the starry spheres," light up in young souls a heaven aspiring flame, a passion for the spiritual beauty and loveliness of unseen worlds so poetically sung of by the poet-prophet of the Ages of Faith.

E. L. Rivard, C. S. V.

St. Viateur's College,
Bourbonnais, Ill., Nov. 25, 1904.

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VIEWS OF DANTE.

CHAPTER I.

WHY READ DANTE?

CONTENTS: — Merits of the Divine Comedy from the Ethical, the Doctrinal, and the Aesthetic Standpoints.— The Divine Comedy as a Trainer of the Imagination.

When one is about to select a book for reading or study, the amount and kind of information and pleasure derivable from the work ought to be the chief determinants of his choice. All books that deserve the name have a certain intellectual, moral, æsthetic, or literary value; some have all these diverse excellencies in a greater or less measure; many fall short in several of them, and very few possess them all in an eminent degree. If we say that in Dante's "Divine Comedy" all these qualities are blended together in a most perfect way we shall have summed up the many reasons why we should read Dante.

We should read the "Divine Comedy," first, because of its intrinsic worth, because it is a perfect literary work, because it is preëminently great, because it is the supreme epic of the Christian ages, because it is a unique blending of Christian

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thought with the richest imagination. We should read it because it will open unto us those vast realms of Christian truths and reveal them to us adorned in garments of dazzling beauty; because it will make us love and admire these fair truths and the lofty ideals of human life which accompany them, and because, besides the many other benefits this work will give us, acquaintance with it will afford us a measure of comparison by which we may rightly gauge the value of other works.

Years ago the scholarly Azarias made us all an eloquent appeal in behalf of Dante? Why has his call not been better heeded? Should it not be a matter of self-reproach that more serious attention is not paid to Dante here? Why should there not be a chair of Dante in our universities, and especially in our Catholic university? and why should not the "Divine Comedy" be included in the advanced courses of literary criticism given in our High Schools, Seminaries, Colleges and principal Academies?

We should not rest satisfied with either proudly naming Dante or merely admitting we have heard cf him; we should seek to know him intimately, to appreciate and admire this rare poet whose imagination, as has been observed, is as delicate as it is profound; this artist who in his sweet, full strain displays perfect mastery of all the varied resources of his many-sided genius; this scholar who had the largest knowledge of his times, and knew best how to teach other ages in his mystic song; this Christian moralist who presents us such perfect ideals of human conduct and such enlightened conceptions of duty, who will impress us with the momentous

importance of our free acts and with the eternal consequences of our conduct in this life; this matchless bard, this Christian Socrates who will show us how our present wretchedness comes from the misuse of our free will; who will point out to us that the only effectual remedy for our ills lies in the right use of our reason enlightened by grace, and who in doing this, will, in his unearthly lullaby, sing us on to a deep and an abiding love of righteousness. This is truly an apostolic task, and well does Norton say no poet has ever undertaken a loftier one.

It is no doubt on account of these unquestionable literary, artistic, moral, and intellectual values that the "Divine Comedy" still lives, although it is the product of an age so widely different from ours. Truth and beauty never grow old. In our days of evolution we all more or less admit the survival of the fittest. In the vast struggle for literary life, how many books are still-born, or, if they live, see no more than the rising sun of their birthday! Their epitaph too might be: "*Et Rose, elle vécu ce que vivent les roses, l'espace d'un matin*": Ephemeral flowers, they live but as roses live, the space of a morning. Other books, like secular oaks, tower giant-like above the petty débris of their own fallen branches and the whole wreck-strewn forest of letters. Dante's "Divine Comedy" is one of those books whose transcendent worth is declared by the verdict of centuries. "The book of widest scope ever devised by man," says a recent critic, "most elaborate in detail, varied in substance, and completest in execution; a work unique in the consistency of its form with its spirit — is the 'Divine Comedy.'"

Now it is certain that in order to improve our minds, to enlighten our intellects, to reason rightly, to strengthen our wills and confirm them in the disposition to seek what is right and good, and furthermore in order to develop our æsthetic faculties, to acquire a literary taste both true and delicate, and to improve our style, we *must* read the masterpieces. These are few enough. There is hardly room here for embarrassment in choice, *i. e.,* there are not so many masterpieces that we are at a loss which to select: two or three at most in each of the principal literatures of the world. We may then be sure that when we have selected Dante we have made an advantageous choice.

The "Divine Comedy" is a stirring poem, one that forces open every faculty of the mind: the imagination, the apprehensive and rational faculties; a poem that awakens the moral sense, rouses the will and stirs the passions, compels the heart to love the good and beautiful, to applaud the triumphs of virtue amid the glowing splendors of paradise; a poem that excites in us pity and commiseration for weak but repentant sinners, whom we are allowed to see hopefully expiating their offenses in purgatory; a poem that fills us with fear and sets us trembling with horror at the sight of the dread torments of the damned in hell. Because it inspires in us this loathing of evil, because it inspires in us this same blessed hope of pardon and this love of all that is fair and good, this book is perhaps, of all books outside the Bible and the Imitation of Christ, the most salutary from a moral standpoint.

It is always encouraging to know, and especially now when

so much that is vile is clothed in the raiment of angels, that in seeking literary advantages in Dante we shall not only not wade unconsciously into moral filth, but if we see vice we shall see it as it is — rampant, serpent-like, and horrid, crawling in loathsome, low, slimy places; and we shall see virtue alone dressed in garments of light and seated upon a throne of glory, so queenly and so radiant that we shall deem it an honor to bow to her dignity and a delight to contemplate her beauty.

This, then, is one of the undoubted advantages of reading Dante. Not only is there no danger in it; there is every sort of helpfulness and of inspiration to good. For Dante is not only unexceptionably moral; he is primarily and always designedly moral. Reading the "Divine Comedy" is a moral tonic. Not even every great Christian poet is thus free from turpitude; compared with Dante, both Tasso and Shakespeare are very "yellow" poets. It is a sign of weakness in writers to have to court the low instincts of the reader in order to hold his attention. Dante is a genius: in him we find evidence of a master mind that has fed abundantly upon the substantial bread of truth and not upon the empty husks of error and doubt. For, be it well noted, Dante's ethic teachings are not the random effusions of a dilettante; they are the expressions of deep and firm convictions based upon the solid rock of natural and revealed truth.

This brings us to consider another of the manifold merits of the "Divine Comedy," and that is what we might call its dogmatic solidity. Dante is sound and safe from the standpoint of philosophical and theological principles, and upon

nearly all the more weighty questions of political and social science. In an age like ours, when insidious error creeps into nearly all forms of literary art, the unimpeachable orthodoxy of Dante should endear him to us and set him up in our estimation as the high priest of science among the poets, the one bard and doctor whose tuneful poem is worthy of our most studious perusal, and is bound to elicit the enthusiastic praise and admiration of every candid lover of truth. Dante gives expression to all the accumulated learning of the middle ages. The "Divine Comedy" has been justly called the encyclopedia of those times. Philosophy, theology, astronomy, history, politics enter into its composition; it reflects, then, all the varied and profound knowledge, the tastes, the loves and hatreds of those impassioned, but so much-maligned centuries. We may note in passing that the "Divine Comedy," being a faithful mirror held up before the face of those ages, is of no slight historical value. And incidentally let us remark that ages which closed with Dante as their spokesman and poet laureate could not, after all, be such dark ages as they are often represented to have been.

We have claimed merit for Dante as a philosopher. We might take the whole of "Purgatory" as an instance of his philosophic teachings. This part of the "Divine Comedy" is a treatise on Christian anthropology, dealing with intricate questions of the formation and growth of man's body, the origin of the soul, its nature, its faculties, its immortality — in all of which the poet follows the peripatetic doctrine of Aristotle and St. Thomas, and defends it against Averroes and other assailants. It will be interesting for students of

philosophy to notice how close the poet comes to the very theses which are established in our modern anthropology.

Dante had a high regard for philosophy. He read himself almost blind studying it; he speaks well of Plato and Aristotle, whom he places in the enamelled greens of Limbo; he makes Virgil personify human reason, Virgil whom he thought enough of to imitate, and whom he chose as his kindly guide through the nether world and up the Mount of Purgatory. Always he gives to philosophy that dignity which belongs to the hand-maid of sacred science, who shall unlock the golden gates of the light-flooded realm of Faith.

But it is as a theologian that Dante excels. As the laureate of scholasticism he sings St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and other learned doctors. The "Divine Comedy" bears out the truth of the inscription on the poet's tomb: "A theologian to whom no dogma was unknown." This poem, adorned with all its fanciful embellishments, yet ever firmly grounded upon the solid rock of truth, is like one of those beautiful Gothic cathedrals, whose foundations seem rooted in the very heart of the earth, while their lofty spires pierce the heavens and their thousand niches are peopled with saints. The "Divine Comedy" teaches all the most important truths concerning God and man, virtue and its reward, heaven, purgatory, hell, good and evil, its punishment, its purification. The grand epic takes up such momentous subjects as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the foundation of the Church, the primacy of Peter, the sacraments, the efficacy of prayer, the invocation of the saints, the exalted dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and others of this nature. As none

but Christians could have built the marvelous cathedrals of Europe, so none but a theologian could have written the "Divine Comedy." In fact the whole poem is the apotheosis of theology in the person of Beatrice, who is the heroine of the epic. To Dante no science appeared more excellent than the science of God, sacred science, or theology. Hence the dignified station and rôle he has assigned to theology in his masterful poem. Beatrice is far and away above Virgil and the philosophers.

If the Bible and the "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas were lost, it would not be impossible to reconstruct the entire body of Catholic doctrine, as to essential points at least, from the "Divine Comedy." Though I would not go so far as to advise a theological student to lay aside the "Summa" and take up instead the "Divine Comedy," I would certainly advise him to read both and enjoy the delicious harmony of the two great souls. Certain it is that the layman could not take up a more delightfully instructive book, nor one that could interest or teach him more thoroughly than Dante's great work will. The poem, as has already been said, deals with all kinds of truths, great truths which we have learned reverently to repeat at our mother's knees; and the illustrious author deals with these truths not in the flippant style of certain modern, self-wise, higher critics, nor in the faint-hearted tones of the perennial skeptic, nor in the blandly blasphemous assertiveness of the all-knowing agnostic; no, Dante is neither a trifler, nor a fool; he treats of these sacred subjects with all the knowledge of a faithful believer, the earnestness of a prophet, and the intensity of an apostle.

His lines are the poetical echo of the Bible; they have the assured and solemn tone of the ex-cathedra teachings of Councils, which the poet, in fact, has but put in verse.

Now, we cannot pass unnoticed here the advantages that must accrue to us from the æsthetic side of this unique work. Dante has wrought into a magnificent canvas the teachings of our faith. Who is there that will not experience a new delight and a just pride upon beholding these truths thus embellished, thus immortalized in a noble and grand work of art? These venerable old truths which we had been accustomed to consider in the abstract only and with a certain awe, become, as it were, transformed into new breathing realities, visible beauties that have figure and color and are instinct with life. We admire them more, and we delight more in their contemplation, and we love them more, because they are thus brought closer to us. Like the angels of Fra Angelico and of Giotto, the three Nymphs of Dante's Purgatory, representing the theological virtues, are material shadows of spiritual realities,— all things of beauty that delight and uplift the soul. How moving is the eloquence of art in the ornamentation of cathedrals and other public edifices of the old Catholic lands! One can never forget the thrill of delight he felt on beholding the living truths of our faith there personified by art. This is surely the one mission of art — to inspire us with love and reverence for all great and saving verities by giving them graceful and commanding forms, and a voice that speaks clearly and always and to all. Sculptors have carved these truths in marble on all the great architectural monuments of the Old World, painters have

limned them in the domes and upon the walls of imposing churches and grave council-halls, and Dante, the best of artists, has written them in characters bold and ineffaceable upon the minds and hearts of all Christendom. He has written the song of the Christian Church; let others write its laws.

This then will be one of the distinctive advantages of reading Dante: to see the truths of religion and of philosophy, the truths of science and of faith go hand in hand, dressed in the dazzling splendor of poetic garb, and to hear them sing in harmonious accord to the tuneful measures of the poet's lyre.

It is certain that any work of art, in order to live, must possess the essential properties of the beautiful. It must please and always. And for this it must have variety with symmetry of parts, lucidity of order, or an easy perceptibleness of its harmonious arrangement, and, finally, moral tone. All these qualities Dante's "Divine Comedy" possesses in an eminent degree, and hence it is a most perfect work of literary art. It was the aim of scholasticism to establish the harmony between faith and reason. Likewise it was the purpose and is one of the characteristic merits of the "Divine Comedy" to establish an alliance between truth and beauty, between scholasticism and poetry. It is easy and interesting to notice how artfully the poet lends wings to the oft-ponderous questions of the schools. As the child Jesus, legend tells us, while at play with his companions, breathed upon His birds of clay and gave them life and flight, so too

Dante handles the same ideas as the schoolmen do, but he breathes poetry into them and makes them soar.

Let it not be said, then, that there is no such thing as didactic poetry. The best proof of the contrary is the existence of the "Divine Comedy." Is not beauty the splendor of truth? That the "Divine Comedy" is poetry no one can doubt. Read any page and you will find it aglow with passion and with imagery. To prove that the poem is didactic, nothing need be added after what has been just now said.

Another very appreciable advantage which we shall derive from a study of Dante is that it will teach us the value of imagery. All poetry does this. "Childe Harold" is a pretty piece of imagination; it has all the exquisite fineness of a cameo; but Dante's pilgrimage transcends all other efforts of creative imagination; it has all the grandeur and variety of a splendid mosaic. Dante will help us to train our imagination, will teach us how to conjure up fancies, how to clothe a subject in something else besides the nakedness of a simple definition or the indispensable swaddlings of philosophic demonstration. To think well is one thing: it is the triumph of reason; to think well and beautifully is another: it is the triumph of the allied forces of reason and of the imagination.

Practical children of a practical age, we are apt to undervalue the merits of the ornamentation of thought and to cast forth our thought as correct but as unadorned as the multiplication table. It is generally accounted the predominant fault of young writers to be too imaginative, too figurative in their style. This may be so in other countries, but

not here; and were it so here, and where it is so, the reading of Dante will teach the right and judicious use of this excellent faculty; for Dante's imagination is not *la folle du logis,* the clown of his intellectual household, but it is always docile to the directions of reason.

That Dante could be so highly imaginative and yet so deeply didactic is a proof of his rare genius. We have seen that in his "Divine Comedy" he teaches all kinds of most important truths and that he is always soundly moral; that his intellect is vigorous and his will right; we further shall find that his imagination is creative. Says Oscar Kuhns in speaking of Dante's imagination: "Take that picture of the land of terror and gloom, with its hail and snow and roaring winds, with its grim and savage landscapes, its forests of gnarled trees, its burning plains and valleys of desolation, the whole overhung with clouds of inky blackness, rent and made lurid by jets of red light or by flickering tongues of flame ["Inferno"]; or that second picture, as beautiful as the first is terrible, with its soft landscapes lying in peaceful loveliness beneath tender skies, with its verdurous valleys and delightful groves, musical with the sweet singing of birds ["Purgatorio"]; or still again that third vision so dazzling that it hardly leaves a picture on the memory, but the effect of which is like that of heavenly melody or the impression that comes upon a man standing at midnight upon the snowy summit of some Alpine mountain with his face upturned to the stars shining above him ["Paradiso"] — in these pictures as in the countless details that go to make them up can be seen the power of Dante's imagination."

But, some might ask, is there no danger that from reading this miracle of the imagination we may become wild, inflated, bombastic, verbose? No; for, wonderful as it may seem, Dante's text is as remarkable for its energetic precision as for its rich imagery. We shall learn to combine both.

We must not be satisfied with hearing or reading about Dante, we must come in personal contact with his own written page. It is this personal perusal that will stir us, move us, enlighten us, and fire us with enthusiasm. It is not, however, necessary to read all the book. We shall find Dante whole in one canto, and, with him, his age and the centuries that go before him.

It is perhaps because of its so finished perfection, of its so wonderful complexity, and of its so lofty moral tone that the "Divine Comedy" has remained the favorite of the intellectual élite. The poem is, moreover, so exquisite that only the trained taste can properly appreciate it. The work has not been popular, nor is it now, in spite of the wider diffusion of knowledge in our day. But in matters of religious, literary, or other art, the popular verdict, especially when there is question of a masterpiece, is not a reliable test of merit. With many the glaring circus-poster or a bright chromo far outshines the Transfiguration of Raphael; and for many indeed the small catechism or a simple homily is far better suited than the "Summa" of St. Thomas or the sermons of Bossuet or Lacordaire. But the force of a plea for the "Divine Comedy" need not rest upon easy demonstrations of the poor taste of those who love not Dante. Suffice it to say that eagles love emeralds, kings adorn their crowns with

pearls, and thus too must you instruct your tastes to be regal, feeding and clothing your minds with that only which is best. Yet, where angels fear to tread the wise will not rush in. Students of Dante, in order not to be disappointed, must have a certain preparation. Their previous studies in literary criticism must have so far perfected their taste, and their acquaintance with the history of Dante's epoch and with the chief tenets of scholasticism must have so far progressed as to qualify them for admission among those scholars who alone can read or will read and appreciate Dante.

CHAPTER II.

REALISM IN THE INFERNO.

CONTENTS: — Dante Creates an Atmosphere of Reality.— His Impressive Earnestness, Boldness and Vividness of Style.— Elements Making for Realism; Frequent and Artfully Graded Complaints of the Powerlessness of Language to Express One-half of what He Saw; Comparisons of Scenes in Hell with Well-known Places and Events; Definiteness of Descriptions; Well Sustained Proportion Between Sin and Punishment; Likelihood; Persons are not Imaginary but Real.

Dante does not artlessly cause the blood curdling descriptions of infernal punishment to pass before the reader's eye in such a way as to leave the impression that these horrors are, after all, nothing but the creations of his fertile imagination. No, for then these lurid, or gloomy pictures would have no more power to move us than the dreams of a madman. But he so prepares the mind beforehand and accompanies his descriptions with such accounts of his own feelings as lend the entire narrative an air of reality. He speaks of these scenes and of his impressions of them with such earnestness that it can hardly occur to the reader that they were otherwise than burning realities to the poet who de-

scribes them. In fact, people pointed him out on the street as the man who had been in hell.

The poet then creates the atmosphere needed by the reader to see things the way he would have us believe he saw them. Now this is a perfection in every art. In music, in grand opera, as well as in epic poetry, the artist must dispose, and throughout keep the listener not only disposed, but compelled to grasp the thought as it flies upon the sound or flashes in the pen-pictures. If he invite us to revel in ecstasies, to view supernatural worlds, he cannot ravish us in a common strain; nor make us believe in his visions of other worlds if he speak the language of the vulgar fakir and not that of a prophet that sees. The prophet must be sure of himself, and in dead earnest. Dante is pre-eminently such: positively and impressively in earnest. He tells of the marvelous as one who beheld it, heard it, felt it, touched it; he tells of it in a language that sounds it, in a language that has borrowed its accents from the jarring discord of hellish disorder. What he saw was a vision, not a sight. He describes it as a seer not as a sight-seer. Milton, though sublime, is blamed for a lack of this tone of mystery, a lack of these accents of a soul whose wings have tipped the eternal splendors, the tone of one whose mental eye has gazed upon the fairness and grandeur of primeval order in the celestial and in the earthly paradise. Milton, says Taine, is the Oxford scholar who is painstakingly developing irrelevant psychological theses. There is not enough in him of the seer who is deeply penetrated with his subject. Taine pays the following tribute to the genius of Dante: "When Dante writes he rasps, and

his cries of anguish, his transports, the incoherent succession of his infernal or mystical phantoms carry us with him into the invisible world which he describes. Ecstasy alone renders visible the objects of ecstasy."

And yet Dante often assures us that he does not relate one-half of what he saw, because language is powerless to describe the scene or express the emotion which the scene aroused in him. What a full magazine of reserve force in all these artful monitions that, notwithstanding all he has said, the end is not yet; that were the whole to be told, no human being could bear to hear the tale. The artist who is not thus in despair of ever realizing his ideal never accomplishes anything great. Let us hear Dante's plaints, those desperate wrestlings of genius in its attempt to make language say what the eye has seen, the heart felt, and the mind conceived. A few instances gathered at random will help to illustrate "the sense of the real" which runs through the Inferno.

In the first place, it is well to keep in mind that Dante himself is a real human being and that it is as such he visits the under-world, conducted by the gentle shade of Virgil. Already our interest is aroused at the thought of a mortal, one still in the flesh, passing the portals where all hope is to be abandoned, entering into the abode whence none e'er return. Rapidly ushered into the realm of silent darkness we hold our breath in our eagerness to find how a man will feel and speak who witnesses such wondrous sights. The poet does not deceive our expectations. He is in another world and speaks as one in the midst of a wild waste of most unearthly horrors. That he paints boldly and vividly what he

sees, that he tests the utmost power of human speech in saying what he saw and felt cannot be denied. Yet in spite of this he is conscious that he falls far short of the awful realities he attempts to reveal.

In the fourth Canto, for instance, after rehearsing a long role of celebrities he met in Limbo, he warns us thus:

> "Of all to speak at full were vain attempt;
> For my wide theme so urges, that ofttimes
> My words shall fall short of what bechanced."

After hearing from Francesca's own lips the pathetic story of her tragic love for Paolo, he thus describes the overpowering pity that seized him:

> "While thus one spirit spake,
> The other wailed so sorely, that heart-struck
> I, through compassion fainting, seemed not far
> From death, and like a corpse fell to the ground."

Further on, arrived at the gates of the city of Dis, entrance is denied the poets. A fallen angel, terrible of aspect, bids Virgil remain and Dante return the way he came, but without his guide. Dante thus speaks of his dismay:

> "Now bethink thee, reader,
> What cheer was mine at sound of those cursed words.
> I did believe I never should return."

After describing the forbidding aspect of the Furies who further hinder their entrance, he calls attention to the fulness of sense he attaches to these types of carnal pleasure and remorse, saying:

> "Ye of intellect
> Sound and entire, mark well the lore concealed
> Under the close texture of the mystic strain."

What impressive earnestness in exclamations such as the following, which escapes the poet's soul after viewing the torments of the violent:

> "Vengeance of heaven! Oh! how shouldest thou be feared
> By all who read what here mine eyes beheld."

Or again, in speaking of the little brook:

> . . . "Whose crimsoned wave yet lifts
> My hair with horror."

Further he beholds the spirits that run swiftly beneath the fierce tormenting rain of fire, and he exclaims:

> "Ah me, what wounds I marked upon their limbs,
> Recent and old, inflicted by the flames.
> E'en the remembrance of them grieves me yet."

And again, in describing the distorted figures of soothsayers and sorcerers, he thus adjures the reader, whose faith in the recital might waver because of the unspeakable awfulness of the things narrated:

> "Now, reader, think within thyself, so God
> Fruit of thy reading give thee! how I long
> Could keep my visage dry, when I beheld
> Near me one form distorted in such guise
> That on the hinder parts fallen from the face
> The tears down streaming rolled."

In the gulf of peculators he beheld the doomed spirits plunge back into the burning pitch at the approach of a horned demon with pronged hook in hand. He says:

> "I saw,
> And yet my heart doth stagger," etc.

In that dread exuberance of woe, that desert of serpents

where, in the seventh gulf of the eighth circle, the robbers are punished, the poet, before speaking of the marvelous transfusions with human forms, exclaims:

> "If, O reader! now
> Thou be not apt to credit what I tell,
> No marvel; for myself do scarce allow
> The witness of mine eyes."

Again, when in the ninth gulf the sight of scandal-mongers and schismatics, all miserably maimed, breaks upon his view, the poet feels unequal to the task of expressing what he saw and felt. He opens this canto in these words:

> "Who, e'en in words unfettered, might at full
> Tell of the wounds and blood that now I saw,
> Though he repeated oft the tale? No tongue
> So vast a theme could equal, speech and thought
> Both impotent alike."

And further on this remarkable passage:

> "But I there
> Still lingered to behold a troop and saw
> Things, such as I may fear without more proof
> To tell of, but that conscience makes me firm,
> The boon companion, who her strong breast-plate
> Buckles on him that feels no guilt within,
> And bids him on and fear not. Without doubt
> I saw, and yet it seems to pass before me,
> A headless trunk, that e'en as the rest
> Of the sad flock passed onward."

It is noteworthy that the lower down the poet descends into the infernal abyss, the more he complains of his impotence to fitly speak of the dread things he sees. On the threshold of Caïna, where, in frozen Cocytus, the betrayers of relatives are punished, he wishes for a lofty and tragic strain suited to the utterance of woe unutterable by tongue

not weaned of childish simplicities. How well he prepares us in these opening lines to see what he is going to reveal:

> "Could I command rough rhymes and hoarse, to suit
> That hole of sorrow o'er which every rock
> His firm abutment rears, then might the vein
> Of fancy rise full springing; but not mine
> Such measures, and with faltering awe I touch
> The mighty theme — for to describe the depth
> Of all the universe, is no emprise
> To jest with, and demands a tongue not used
> To infant babbling."

And his emotion reaches its climax, and the sense of reality most completely overwhelms the poet when he enters Judecca, and his kindly guide bids him arm his heart with strength to view the arch traitors, and "that creature eminent in beauty once" now become emperor of the realm of sorrow, Lucifer, there held fast in ice and crushed beneath all there is of iniquity in hell. He says:

> "Now came I (and with fear I bid my strain
> Record the marvel) where the souls were all
> Whelmed underneath. . . .
> How frozen and faint I then became
> Ask me not, reader! for I write it not;
> Since my words fail to tell of my tale.
> I was not living nor dead. Think thyself,
> If quick conception work in thee at all,
> How I did feel."

Another feature which heightens the realism of Dante is his selection of well-known places and events as a basis of comparison, and also his artful allusions to the descriptions of horrible scenes by other poets. For instance, in order to give an idea of the loathsome distempers which afflict alchemists and forgers, he says:

"As were the torments if each lazar house
Of Valdichiana, in the sultry time
'Twixt July and September, with the isle
Sardinia and Maremma's pestilent fen,
Had heaped their maladies all in one fosse
Together; such was here the torment; dire
The stench, as issuing streams from festered limbs."

So, too, when he draws the veil from before that wild waste of woe wherein robbers are stung, seized, enwrapped, constricted by, and even transformed into serpents, he exclaims:

. . . . "And then, the chasm
Opening to my view, I saw a crowd within
Of serpents terrible, so strange of shape
And hideous, that remembrance in my veins
Yet shrinks the vital current. Of her sands
Let Libya vaunt no more; if Jaculi,
Phareæ and Chelydri be her brood
Cenchri and Amphisbæna, plagues so dire,
Or in such numbers swarming ne'er showed,
Not with all Ethiopia and whate'er
Above the Erythrean sea is spawned."

After relating the fearful transmutations he had witnessed, he thus artfully refers to Lucan and Ovid:

"Lucan in mute attention now may hear,
. . . . Ovid now be mute.
What if in warbling fiction he record
Cadmus and Arethusa, to a snake
Him changed, and her into a fountain clear,
I envy not; for never face to face
Two natures thus transmuted did he sing
Wherein both shapes were ready to assume
The other's semblance."

To appreciate still more fully the realism and earnestness of the Inferno, one may fancy himself living at the time the

work was written, and in the places described in the poem, or transpose the date of the events to the present time and change the names of the cities apostrophized. For instance, in these lines put, say, *Chicagoese* instead of *Genoese:*

> "Ah, Genoese! men perverse in every way,
> With every foulness stained, why from the earth
> Are ye not cancelled?" etc.

Or suppose *New York* instead of *Florence* were the butt of the following ironical salute:

> "Florence, exult! for thou so mightily
> Has thriven, that o'er land and sea thy wings
> Thou beatest, and thy name spreads over hell.
> Among the plunderers, such the three I found
> Thy citizens."

Thus might texts be multiplied indefinitely, not only from the "Inferno," but from the other parts of the "Divine Comedy" as well — passages which show how admirably the poet preserves that high tension of earnestness so indispensable in one who discourses upon the marvelous. For any poet to do this is to accomplish a rare feat in the treatment of any subject, and especially such a subject as the one Dante chose. Ruskin remarks that the exact measurements of the circles and the definiteness of the descriptions of Dante bespeak the highest order of imaginative power. He leaves us not as it were dreaming before some indefinite vision, but rather shuddering in the presence of some dread outstanding reality.

Considered from the standpoint of art, and not from any theological, philosophical, or political standpoint, it is striking, and forcibly so, that the entire "Divine Comedy" is in a

most serious strain, and that the "Inferno" has about it a peculiar vividness, is made to stand out as an objective reality, with dread horrors that are real, and not mere mental figments, phantoms of an imagination gone mad.

Imagination at white heat could not have preserved the equilibrium of guilt and punishment. Art demanded that likelihood be regarded. Hence the division of the abyss into circles corresponding to various classes of sinners; hence the modes of punishment varying according to degrees of guilt. Art wants proportion, symmetry. They are present. This constant correspondence between the gulfs of pain and the deserts of those therein engulfed is one of the noteworthy elements of artful likelihood, of that reality for which the Inferno is remarkable. Thus the light-hearted sinners who have allowed themselves in their mortal life to be carried along by the fitful gusts of lustful passions are ceaselessly borne along on the sweeping surges of the hot, stormy blasts of hell; the avaricious and the prodigal are seen in the pit spending mighty efforts in uselessly rolling in contrary directions huge bags of money and fiercely upbraiding each other; fortune-tellers, who would have seen into the future have their faces and legs reversed so they can but see and walk backward; murderers suffer in rivers of blood; schismatics who have rent society are cloven in twain, their wounds healing only to be eternally reopened; traitors are fixed in the ice of their proud selfishness with the arch rebel, Lucifer, the flapping of whose leathern wings freezes the very ice which holds him and his imitators captive.

It is a hell of demons, fallen angels of varying degrees of

consent in rebellion — all finished types of perversity, agents of special pain inflicted for special sins they have urged mortals to commit. It is a hell of human souls, disembodied it is true, yet wearing enough of fleshly substance to be sensible to agencies of physical pain.

Moreover, it must be granted that the characters whom Dante brings upon the scene, the persons referred to or expressly mentioned in the poem, are not imaginary personages, not mere straw men who will be burned up as sacrificial offerings to the personal hatred or political spite of the hungry Exile of Florence. No; though he had provocation enough and genius enough to dig a hell in which to consign the Lilliputian souls that had wound around his great and sensitive heart all the cords of sorrow, yet he was greater than all this, and infinitely above such petty vengeance. His hell is the hell of offenders against God, society, and self. The few who rise to the surface from out of the tumultuous multitudes that surge in the abyss are types of sinners of all times and the world over. Some of these, whom he recognizes, are people whom he had known and loved, as, for instance, Francesca, whom, as a child, he had danced upon his knee, and Brunetto Latini, the kind, paternal shade in whom he recognizes his devoted preceptor. These were no mere fancy characters. They had lived before his very eyes. The spirits of Clement V, Nicholas III, and the name of Boniface VIII were those of real men who all lived in Dante's own time. No less well known and real were such characters as those of the unfortunate Count Ugolino, and of Vanni Fucci, the sacrilegious Pistoese robber. Judas, Brutus and Cassius,

Caiaphas and Annas are historical characters as well known as the world-renowned rulers, Cæsar and Cleopatra, the sages Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and Avicenna, the world poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, all of whom we meet in Dante's hell, judiciously distributed throughout the circles from Limbo to the frozen pit.

Of course, one will be allowed to say, by way of parenthesis, that when we rest upon the reality of these characters, the likelihood of Dante's hell, we speak of likelihood. Dante's judgment need not be accepted as infallible and final, one with which the Almighty must comply. But Dante had foundation enough upon which to build his judgment, and does not condemn to eternal pain any character for any good it did. Many of the historical personages mentioned are known chiefly for the evil they did; and the poet, as he read history and appreciated actions, motives and passions, gave these a place in his poem. The likelihood remains.

Nor will it avail to object that, perched on every fiery summit, or concealed in every gloomy recess, or guarding every entrance, or patrolling every arch that spans the frightful chasms, are seen all sorts of Furies, Gorgons, Harpies, Centaurs and other mere mythological creations. All these evil deities the pagans had invented. Dante found them already made. Their names and the functions ascribed to them, he merely translates to the evil spirits of his own hell. There is no reason why the poet should be refused the privilege of baptizing demons, rebel angels, when he found such appropriate names to call them by. "These spirits," says Mr. Wilstach in his translation of the "Divine Comedy," "are

robust shades compared with the squeaking ghosts of Homer and Virgil. They speak their emotions in every human modulation of voice — high, low, subdued or free, gay or solemn. They are not ideal trembling visions, but actual, real, palpable entities."

All this it is certain contributes to give to the "Inferno" the air of reality which can be claimed for it. Unutterable though these terrors are said to be, yet the expression of them is ever carefully guarded from any extravagance; there is always masterful force and withal careful reserve; there are such unearthly horrors and yet such clearly human pangs, that the whole infernal waste, with its flame illumined gloom, its horned devils, its fleshy spirits, its constantly devouring yet never consuming fires, stands out before us as some dread and unaccountable reality which one mortal saw with his own eyes and returned to earth to tell of.

The "Inferno" is one of the great triumphs of perfect art. To handle such various, strange and weighty materials, to blend all the moral discords of the world into the harmonious whole of hell called for a supreme artist such as Dante.

CHAPTER III.

SPIRITUALITY OF PURGATORIO.

CONTENTS: — MARKS OF THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF A BOOK.— MATERIALISM'S REMEDY.— DANTE SPIRITUALIZES BODIES, PLACES, SOUNDS, PERSONS, ACTIONS.— COMPARISONS.— THE SOUL: ITS DIVINE ORIGIN, ITS LIBERTY, RESPONSIBILITY, IMMORTALITY, REINCARNATION.— PRAYER.— SACRAMENTS.— GRACE.— MESSAGES TO THE VIRTUOUS.— WARNINGS TO THE SINFUL.— HOPE.— EDENIC PAGEANT.— TRIUMPH OF BEATRICE.

Upon issuing out of the tenebrous and oppressive atmosphere of the "Inferno," one experiences a sense of relief and breathes more easily. Fresh dawns, with their soft light tremulously stealing over gently rippling waves, greet and delight the eye; and the air, so light and pure, and fanned only by angels' wings, lifts the soul to the serene, sun-illumined altitudes where dwell the pure. We begin to feel the breath of angels, and ourselves to breathe the air of a more purely spiritual world. Artfully the poet tells us he has launched the light bark of his genius over better waves and invoked the Muse of epic verse to inspire him to a "higher song." From the very beginning one feels that he leaves material worlds behind, and, according as he proceeds, he easily discovers how much more musical, soft, beauteous, and spiritual is this strain than were the chants of the

damned; how much more mystic, allegorical, didactic, and withal poetic it is than the "Inferno;" hence, also, how far it is a "higher song."

The more difficult of execution a work is, the more glory redounds to him who does it well. The more great truths a poet weaves into his song, the more difficult the task, and the larger his merit for accomplishing it poetically. For these reasons is the "Purgatory" indeed a "higher song." It seems to me that the clear and winsome charms of spirituality cannot fail to appeal to every reader of the "Purgatorio."

What a delight to quit the earth, even for a few moments, and in mind only, to consort with pure spirits, incorporeal beings, ministers of high heaven; to move among souls, immaterial, self-subsisting forms, clad in ambient air; to see their thoughts and their affections soaring heavenward until we, too, "for flight feel within us the pinions growing." Thus we shall see the soul, we shall hear it pray and hope in the midst of its hymns of repentance; then, also, will the saints intervene, and in the glowing fervor of their blessedness, show themselves the friends and helpers of these struggling human spirits. We shall meet the illuminating Lucia and happy-making Beatrice. The descriptions of the scenes, personages, and actions will be such as to ever suggest the spiritual. The very comparisons used in order to bring these invisible things within the range of our apprehension are drawn all from the least material of material objects. In a word, the whole atmosphere of purgatory is such that in it we can almost touch spirituality.

If the spiritual power of a book is to be measured by the

immateriality of the objects it describes, the loftiness and purity of the thoughts it inspires, the holiness of the desires it begets, and the nearness it brings us to the founts of saving grace, then is "Purgatorio" eminently spiritual. All such books compel us to admire and worship the beauty and excellence of spiritual things. There are other books — unfortunately, modern literature teems with them — books that deny the existence of all spiritual being, and would teach man the worship of mere earthly beauty and material excellence. In them nature is the temple, and short-lived pleasures and transitory wealth are the godlets man serves, just as if he were born to crawl his whole short span of life upon this dustful globe, nor ever raise his eyes skyward to behold the stars, to anchor his hopes thereto, and to yearn for those better and brighter worlds.

What ridiculous pygmies we are made into by materialism! The sense of our own dignity revolts against such an abasement. If the thousands of university students of our materialistic age, and the millions of readers of modern so-called literature are ever to find out both how great and how small man is, what he is, whence he comes and whereunto he is destined, they will have to read the Bible, Thomas á Kempis, and Dante. Here they will not be asked to believe, contrary to their own inmost sense, and upon the mere word of a guessing scientist, that they are mere clods started into vital motion by chance, and that death is the end-all of this hazard-born life. They will learn that the vital spark is enkindled in us by breath divine; that we are the handiwork of the most intelligent of designers, and the children of the most loving

deity; that earthly pleasures are set for an encouragement to duty, and that present trials are but stepping-stones to future thrones in glory. What an inspiration to higher and nobler human life is the very knowledge of what we are and why we are! Can the human mind longer than the prodigal feed upon the husks of negation and contradiction? How gladly must it, after such long fasts, welcome the plenteous viands of positive and consistent truths spread before it by its heavenly Father! What a delight to gaze, not upon a disorderly debris, but on a structure of truth more enduring than the pyramids and more beautiful than the fabric of fancy's dreams.

Let us con the pages of "Purgatorio" and see wherein its spiritual power consists. Here the human spirit is purged from sinful blot and prepares for ascent to heaven. We have already traveled far from the world of bodies, transported by the poet's fancy across a vast ocean up to the sky-kissing mountain of purgatory. Here we meet these milder shades, as Milton calls them, undergoing the process of purification; we see their transformation, as that of the worm becoming the butterfly. Having donned wedding garments of purity they soar to realms of light and blessedness, while the mountain thrills with gladness. As we mount with them our feet grow lighter, and our faces and our souls turn instinctively to the starry spheres.

The first one we meet at the foot of the mountain is the shade of Cato, who, unlike the spirits in Hell, is unmoved by flattery or the recollection of his wife's fondness for him; but at the mention of the desire of a heavenly dame that

these visitors be shown to the entrance door, the "old man" gives the proper directions, bidding Dante gird himself with the reed of humility and lave his face, for the humble and clean alone can hope to rise towards God. Let us note in passing, the deep mystic meaning of this reed, in describing which the poet exclaims:

> . . . . "And, strange to tell!
> As he selected every humble plant
> Wherever one was plucked another there,
> Resembling, straightway in its place arose."

The poet here teaches us that goods of the spirit are not diminished by appropriation; a thing, this, which cannot be said of material goods, to be sure. The more money you draw from your bank-account, the less the fund becomes.

In the "Inferno" the spirits appear sunk in matter, and the devils even use heavy, material instruments of torture. Here ("Purgatorio") every spirit, and, indeed, everything, seems freer from matter, and even material objects are spiritualized. Take, for example, the description of the angel conducting the bark of souls to the mountain. First the poets see in the distance a "brightness" which afterwards "opens in the form of wings." Virgil exclaims:

> "Lo, how all human means he sets at naught;
> So that nor oar he needs nor other sail
> Except his wings, between such distant shores."

Dante himself thus speaks of the angel, his bark, and its freight:

> "As more and more toward us came, more bright
> Appeared the bird of God, nor could the eye
> Endure his splendor near: I mine bent down.

He drove ashore in a small bark so swift
And light that in its course no wave it drank.
The heavenly steersman at the prow was seen
Visibly written Blessed in his looks;
Within a hundred spirits and more there sat."

One feels as though he were already in a world of glorified bodies, so lightsome and agile are these. The bodies here are not only light and swift as thought, but intangible as sunbeams. See what happens when Dante goes to embrace that sweet singer Casella:

. . . . "O shadow vain!
Except in outward semblance: thrice my hands
I clasped behind it, they as oft returned
Empty into my breast again." . . . .

The spirits in their swift flight are compared to shooting stars. Thus, when two repentant souls are allowed to bid their fellows come and ask prayers of Dante, their precipitancy in executing their message is such that the poet exclaims:

"Ne'er saw I fiery vapors with such speed
Cut through the serene air at fall of night,
Nor August's clouds athwart the setting sun,
That upward these did not in shorter space
Return; and, there arriving, with the rest,
Wheel back on us, as with loose rein a troop."

In hell the spirits moan and shriek and curse; here they pray and sing:

. . . . "Ah! how far unlike to these
The spirits of hell; here songs to usher us;
There shrieks of woe."

In portraying these spirits and in describing their actions, he compares them to the gentler objects of the visible creation: to lambs, to doves, to birds, to stars, to light clouds

flitting athwart blue skies. See, for example, how beautifully the poet paints the breathless avidity with which a troop of loitering spirits listened to the love song of Casella, and how artfully he likens their dispersion by the venerable Cato to the sudden flight of frightened pigeons:

> "As a wild flock of pigeons, to their food
> Collected, blade or tares, without their pride
> Accustomed, and in still and quiet sort,
> If aught alarm them, suddenly desert
> Their meal, assailed by more important care;
> Lo I that new-come troop beheld, the song
> Deserting, hasten to the mountain's side
> As one who goes, yet where he tends, knows not."

Again, to describe the sweet simplicity and candor of these "spirits perfect" of whom the two poets had inquired the way to the gate, Dante compares them to sheep. Because one or two were astonished at seeing the shadow which Dante's body cast they stopped, and so did all the rest stop and gaze, not knowing why they did so.

> "As sheep that step from forth their fold, by one,
> Or pairs, or threes at once; meanwhile the rest
> Stand fearfully, bending the eye and nose
> To ground, and what the foremost does, that do
> The others, gathering round her if she stops,
> Simple and quiet, nor the cause discern;
> So saw I moving to advance the first,
> Who of the fortunate crew were at the head,
> Of modest mien, and graceful in their gait.
> When they before me had beheld the light
> From my right side fall broken on the ground,
> So that the shadow reached the cave, they stopped,
> And somewhat back retired; the same did all
> Who followed, though unwitting of the cause."

Needless to remark that bees, butterflies, lambs, doves, flowers, are everywhere in both sacred and profane literature chosen to symbolize certain virtues, which other living things, more material, could not so fittingly typify. All these and many other such arts the poet uses to create and keep pure the atmosphere of spirituality that hovers over purgatory.

But it would be of little import that there be spirits above and below us and all around us if man himself had no spark of spirituality. Any chapter on man must interest us. "Purgatorio" contains in a few lines a whole treatise on man; it builds him up of matter actuated by a vital principle, that is an intellectual substance called the soul, a new spirit which is replete with virtue, *i. e.*, capable of exercising the operations of vegetation, sentiency, and intellection, and breathed into him by the Primal Mover. Thus have we kinship with angels and our common Father; thus are we not mere mortal clods, but bear we within us that spark of essential life which is immortal. After death, the disembodied soul goes to Acheron (hell), or Tiber's mouth (purgatory), according to the merits of its temporal existence in the mortal body. Human liberty and the corresponding sense of responsibility, the necessity of hope and faith, of prayer and corresponding divine assistance, of merit and demerit, are all strongly emphasized in every line of these cantos.[1] When the human spirit has winged its flight to purgatory, says Dante, it forms for itself a shadow body from out the circumambient air, somewhat as a sunbeam shining on the water-saturated air, becomes a rainbow. And

[1] Cantos 16, 17, 18.

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this shadow-enveloped spirit is endued with every sense — sight, speech, laughter, sighs, and tears. Later these purified shadows will become "splendors," "glories," to deck paradise, which is their ultimate destiny. What splendid moral power to elevate and spiritualize us is there not in these teachings? Were they but the dreamings of a poet's fancy, their very beauty, it would seem, would have power to woo us to higher lives. But these teachings are not mere vain imaginings; they are in the main only the poetic expression of what revelation and reason teach us on man and the soul. Poetry is never so charming as when it is the splendor of truth.

One who knows anything about the spiritual power of a book will appreciate what that book teaches upon prayer, the sacraments, grace, the intercession of saints, and other like subjects. Everywhere "Purgatory" teaches these things. Concerning perfect contrition, Manfred says:

> "When by two mortal blows
> My frame was shattered, I betook myself
> Weeping to Him who of free will forgives.
> My sins were horrible; but so wide arms
> Hath goodness infinite, that it receives
> All who turn to it."

Buonconte relates how the invocation of Mary's name saved him at death's hour from the devil's grasp; and how this arch-fiend complained of being robbed of his victim's soul "for one poor tear," and thereafter wreaked his vengeance upon the soulless body. The blessed spirits themselves are met at every turn singing psalms of repentance, hope, thanksgiving: the *In exitu Israel,* the *Miserere,* the *Te Deum, Salve*

Regina, Pater Noster, and other invocations. They plead for the suffrages of the living, that their expiation may be shortened; they ask the prayers of pure souls only. "Here must I remain to the very end," says Belacqua,

> . . . . "If prayer do not aid me first
> That riseth up from heart that lives in grace.
> What other kind avails, not heard in heaven?"

Even the rationalistic objection that "Heaven's supreme decree can never bend to supplication," proposed by Dante himself, is answered by Virgil saying that love can take the place of punishment without weakening justice, *i. e.,* prayers which are the offering of our love are accepted by God as a substitute for punishment due to suffering souls. And then, Virgil claims not to settle the difficulty finally, being only human reason; he remits him to Beatrice (Divine Science), who will clear whatever of doubt may remain in his mind.

Arrived at the gate of purgatory, after following the guidance of Lucia, Dante in beautiful allegorical passages, teaches the doctrine of confession, contrition, and satisfaction as necessary for the forgiveness of sins of thought, word, and deed, and the accompanying doctrine of the spiritual power to bind and loose. (Recall the three kinds of marble steps to the gate, and the angel with the gold and silver keys.)

Having entered into the circles of expiation, we are shown what sad havoc each of the capital sins works in the soul, and are confronted with shining examples of the opposite virtues.

Upon the marble mountain-sides in the vale where the proud are expiating their sin, are seen "storied in the rock"

models of humility, and of pity; and, also, imaged on the sand, are types of presumption and pride. The proud can look upon the blessed humility of the Maid of Nazareth, pictured there, as the angel salutes her.

> "One had sworn
> He had said 'Hail!' for she was imaged there,
> By whom the key did open to God's love;
> And in her act as sensibly imprest
> That word, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord,'
> As figure sealed on wax."

As he journeys along these terraces peopled with repentant souls, the poet avails himself of his many opportunities to send virtue-inspiring messages to the living, and to show the ugliness of every vice.

Forese, after proclaiming the praise of his virtuous Nella, inveighs bitterly against the unblushing dames of Florence and their immodest dress:

> "What savage women had the world e'er seen,
> What Saracens, for whom there needed scourge
> Of spiritual and other discipline
> To force them walk with covering on their limbs?"

Throughout this entire part of the poem, Dante makes us hope in the expiatory virtue of suffering: through pain the spirits are cleansed. Now, who gives us hope uplifts us morally. Hope is the Archimedean lever of the moral world. "Purgatorio" is a great hymn of hope in God's mercy.

It would be a long, but an easy and a very profitable task to show the vast store of spiritual meaning woven into every verse of the concluding cantos of "Purgatorio." But I must now be brief. Here our poets, Virgil, Statius,

and Dante, have entered the earthly paradise situated on the summit of the mountain of purification. Here Dante sees passing before his wondering eyes visions most entrancing; sees under forms of inexpressible beauty, types of active and of contemplative life; sees loveliest personifications of the cardinal and theological virtues with the smile of heaven's grace upon them. Of these three nymphs, Charity, Hope, and Faith, he says:

> "The one so ruddy that her form had scarce
> Been known within a furnace of clear flame;
> The next did look as if the flesh and bones
> Were emerald; snow new-fallen seemed the third."

He meets Christ and apostolic bands of exulting saints, followed by the spirits of loyalty and love towards the Church. In the midst of this triumphant procession appears Beatrice, the personification of Divine Wisdom, "A virgin wreathed in white veil with olive, beneath green mantle, robed in hue of living flame." But to see the true beauty of his Beatrice, who chides him for his faults, Dante must lave himself in the waters of Lethe, nor must he, even thereafter, too fixedly look upon her face. His first glimpse of her, which so overpowered him that he fell conscience-stricken to the ground, he thus describes:

> "As mine eyes beheld
> (Yet unassured and wavering in their view)
> Beatrice; she who towards the mystic shape,
> That joins two natures in one form, had turned:
> And even under the shadow of her veil,
> And parted by the verdant rill that flowed
> Between, in loveliness she seemed as much
> Her former self surpassing, as on earth
> All others she surpassed."

After bathing in Lethe, he again sees Beatrice (Theology), the guide and guardian of her chariot (the Church).

> . . . . "But mine eyes had now
> Ta'en view of her, by whom all other thoughts
> Were barred admittance."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "The seven nymphs
> Did make themselves a cloister round about her
> And, in their hands, upheld those lights secure
> From blast septentrion and the gusty wind."

This is high soaring. In this eagle flight the poet seems to test all the splendid powers of his genius; he tests the vast resources of his varied learning; to proclaim the apotheosis of Divine Science he gives his creative imagination free rein and dips its wizard brushes in the fairest colors to paint this Triumph of Beatrice in the earthly paradise. His memory and his exhaustive power of invention and of blending the real with the mystical, the mythical with the theological are made to contribute their share. His reason presides over all, and, in paying her own tribute, keeps in due bounds and harmonious action every other power of the poet, the man, the lover and the theologian. What other poet has in four or five cantos thus eloquently, thus charmingly, sung the triumph of all the spiritual forces that hover over the earth and uplift mankind? Has he not already glorified Beatrice as no other woman was ever glorified by mortal poet? We feel that we meet here the catastrophe, the culminating point of the poem; that this scene is intended to be the one of central interest, power and beauty in the entire "Divine Comedy," as the keystone is the highest, strongest and most beautiful part of an arch.

Fain would we tarry here among these sweetly tuneful bowers and vivifying founts of earthly paradise, and mingle with the beauteous spirits which haunt this eden of delights; but the poet tells us that after drinking of the holy wave, Eunoè, he was made pure and apt for mounting to the stars. And so we, too, casting aside every vestige of earthly vanity, now long to follow him to yet brighter and more spiritual worlds. Before mounting higher, however, we cannot help congratulating the poet for building such a fitting vestibule to the mansions of the heavenly paradise where dwell the "glories" and "splendors" in the revealed face of God's beauty and loveliness. He has taught us to admire and love spiritual excellence, and to prepare ourselves for the delights of the pure in spirit and of pure spirits, the vision beatific. So spiritual is "Purgatorio" that, although the poet speaks of angels

> "Winnowing the air with those eternal plumes
> That not like human hairs fall off or change,"

it seems as though he had written this with plume fallen from some angel's wing and dipped in the pure azure of heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

WHY READ "PARADISO"?

CONTENTS:—"PARADISO" LACKS NOT HUMAN INTEREST.—ANGELS NOT STRANGERS TO US.—HEAVEN OUR DESTINY.—SCHEME OF "PARADISO" BRIEFLY OUTLINED.—"PARADISO'S" MESSAGE FOR RELIGIOUS PERSONS, FOR MONEY-MAKERS, PHILOSOPHERS, THEOLOGIANS, RULERS, AND PREACHERS.—ANGELS.—VISION OF GODHEAD.—LITERARY AND MORAL VALUE OF "PARADISO."

Of the three great divisions of the "Divine Comedy," "Paradiso" is the least read. Perhaps this is because "Paradiso," it is felt, is a world that far transcends all human experience, a world that transcends space and time, a world whose immensity is bounded by boundless love and light, a world in whose unimaginable splendor is celebrated the eternal triumph of the Supreme Good, a world all glorious with the revealed beauty of God's own being, a world of unmixed joy and of perpetual delight; a world peopled not as the "Inferno" with shadowy bodies, nor as "Purgatorio" with air-formed bodies, but with pure spirits and disembodied souls which appear in the form of light and are called brightnesses, splendors, glories, lives, loves, fires, flames. These intangible beings speak no language; but they speak in their beamy twinkles to the eye, the most spiritual of the

senses. They are called fires, flames, because fire is the most spiritual of the elements; its ardorous heart ever tending to escape from earth to its parent orb in the heavens, and its flames, like extended arms, ever rising toward the sky. So too these spirits live ever in transports of holy aspiration towards the essential Good.

And, it is natural to ask, what have these saintly lights, these luminous spirits in common with us clayey mortals? Well, after all, these pure intelligences, these angels, we are not at this age of the world so inexperienced, so uninitiated as to be incapable to conceive them. Even the pagan sages had dreamt of them; the patriarchs were visited by them; Christians have long ago made them household deities. Besides their chief function, which is that of contemplation and love of the divine beauty, they are in various ways instruments of divine omnipotence. They impart to the orbs of the universe their physical motions; they deliver the messages of God to men; they are our moral guides, defenders, and judges. It is clearly impossible that we remain reasonably indifferent to the meeting of such beings. And with these teems Dante's "Paradiso."

Again, heaven is surely the destined goal of human souls which now dwell in clay. Hundreds of millions of such souls have already been translated to that kingdom and are seated upon luminous thrones of glory. We claim human kinship with all these regal souls that reign amid the splendors of heaven, and that have not, for even all this, ceased to be human. Beatrice, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Justinian, Cacciaguida, St. Peter Damian, St. Bernard, and

hosts of other illustrious mortals dwell among the white legions of the immortals and add human interest to the superhuman legend. Christ and the Blessed Mary, whose glorified bodies have rejoined their triumphant souls, render yet more vivid the picture of heaven as the ultimate state and destiny of human beings. And besides all this, to see one mortal still clad in weeds of perishable flesh pass these high boundaries of all there is of perfection in finite beings, and himself stand in the full radiant presence of the infinite Being, and obtain a vision of God which thrills every fibre of his soul with keenest delight; to hear this man recount such personal experience! What? This could be dull? Could lack human interest? Fie! Must we then rest ever satisfied with common circuses, literary and otherwise, nor ever to teach ourselves to revel in literary grand opera?

If we were to form our tastes according to the canons of positivism and utilitarianism and entertain ourselves only with objects that strike the senses or that serve instant physical needs, we should soon cease to be human; we should become brutish; we should renounce all the superior delights of the imagination, ignore all the rich finds of reasoning, give up all the pleasure derivable from contemplation of ideal beauty, and, dooming ourselves to feed alone upon the empty husks of error and sin, abandon forever the sweet hope of basking in the joy-filling love of the perfect good so plenteously abundant in our Father's house.

No! we must not shut out heaven from our sight. Even if it were a myth, it were still an inspiration and a comfort, a beautifier of our earthly lives. But it is a grand reality.

It is our end, and as such, is the principle and measure of the rectitude and excellence of our human acts. Tell me not then that a knowledge of heaven can be a matter of indifference to human beings. To climb thither even in imagination, to mount with Dante to the starry spheres, in a word, to read "Paradiso," may require some effort; but as in mountain-climbing, when with painful ascent the tourist has scaled the topmost cliff of some lofty Alpine glacier, he views all the varied panorama that stretches beneath, and plunges his eager eye into the ravishing splendors of the heavens; so too the spiritual climber who follows the heavenly tourist will from his high station look in wonderment upon all the universe of being and will see, above and beyond, the glittering thrones and crowns that await all his heroism. Mount then; there is your milky way amid the stars. With Dante follow Beatrice, treading upon a sea of sustaining light, treading upon the stars, rising ever upward on the golden bars of this heavenly ladder until you reach highest empyrean.

And what will you see? First you visit the moon, which is the heaven of those who in their struggles for the perfect good encountered great obstacles and barely vanquished them. It is here that the struggling will of man is crowned with victory. Angels are here in control. Next you are, with incredible rapidity, transported to Mercury, where all that is merited by the laudable ambition to accomplish great and illustrious deeds finds its realization. This star is under the command of archangels. In Venus you will meet with the principalities, those who have been lovers and have thus

sanctified themselves. This heaven is especially sacred to the affectionate will of man. In the Sun, which is sacred to light, dwell the doctors of the Church under the leadership of the angelic powers. This heaven is the special reward of faith. The justice of equitable rulers triumphs in the heaven of Jupiter, which is controlled by the dominions. In Saturn is witnessed the victory of asceticism. The thrones rule here. The canonized saints dwell in the fixed stars with the cherubim; and with the seraphim dwell moral philosophers in the Primum Mobile. Beyond and above all these worlds, is the vast empyrean, abode of the Divine Presence, controlled by Supreme Wisdom and especially sacred to the Deity.

It will be at once perceived that on the score of most apt, suggestive, and beautiful symbolism, as well as on the score of variety, Dante's plan and treatment of heaven leave nothing to be desired. Yet his "Paradiso" is no common variety show. Variety as to scenes and personages, as to rewards and enjoyments, as to ideas and sentiments, is not introduced into it merely to avoid monotony, nor ever at the risk of sacrificing unity; that springs directly out of the richness of the subject and aids us to grasp it in its large completeness.

Are you a religious person, monk, sister, brother, or friar, and would you wish to hear an eloquent eulogy of the religious state which you have embraced and of which sometimes "liberal" Catholics think and speak so meanly? Read then the following beautiful words of the wise Beatrice upon the vow of obedience. She is instructing Dante, and her

teaching is not less cheering than it is exalted. She thus begins ("Paradiso," C. V, 18):

> "Supreme of gifts, which God, creating, gave
> Of his free bounty, sign most evident
> Of goodness, and in his account most prized,
> Was liberty of will; the boon wherewith
> All intellectual creatures, and them sole,
> He hath endowed. Hence now thou mayst infer
> Of what high worth the vow, which is so framed
> That when man offers, God well-pleased accepts:
> For in the compact between God and him,
> This treasure, such as I describe it to thee,
> He makes the victim; and of his own act."

If you have a theological bias and fancy fine-spun distinctions, read in the preceding canto what is said by Beatrice and the nun Piccarda on the absolute and the relative will in the matter of virginity.

Would you like to hear the praise of poverty? Hear then how St. Thomas eulogizes it, the bride of St. Francis ("Paradiso," C. XI, 54):

> "A dame, to whom none openeth pleasure's gate
> More than to death, was, 'gainst his father's will,
> His stripling choice: and he did make her his,
> Before the spiritual court, by nuptial bonds,
> And in his father's sight: from day to day,
> Then loved her more devoutly. She, bereaved
> Of her first husband, slighted and obscure,
> Thousand and hundred years and more, remained
> Without a single suitor, till he came."

Are you a ruler — president or emperor — and would you know what is thought where is witnessed the triumph of justice? Soar into Jupiter and see those millions of saintly lights exulting in their joyous flight and singing as they

describe in their graceful motion the letters of the text: "Love righteousness, ye that be the judges of the earth." See in this flaming legend the cause of the especial joy of these blissful flames who "loved justice and hated iniquity"; let these words of fire burn themselves into your souls so that you by justice may merit an equal reward. Fall upon your knees with Dante in this heaven and implore of these holy spirits the sense and grace of justice. Look well and long upon that marvelous, that so well-devised and intricate, yet eloquent piece of poetical machinery, the figure of the eagle into which these million sacred sparks range themselves, and there learn from the tuneful beak and the speechful eye of this mystic bird how the justice of God rewards the justice of man. (Cautos XVIII-XX.)

Are you a divine and desirous to know the number of the predestined? Heaven answers you that nor the elect of earth nor even the angels know who is to be saved. Be content to know that a deeper mystery is there than can be solved by finite mind. Hear a voice from the heaven of Saturn:

> "O how far removed,
> Predestination! is thy root from such
> As see not the First Cause entire: and ye,
> O mortal men! be wary how ye judge:
> For we who see our Maker, know not yet
> The number of the chosen; and esteem
> Such scantiness of knowledge our delight:
> For all our good is, in that primal good,
> Concentrate; and God's will and ours are one."

Or would you ask if it is possible to fathom the reason why one is chosen in preference to another? Hear the answer made to Dante:

"But not the soul
That is in heaven most lustrous, nor the seraph
That hath his eye most fixed on God shall solve
What thou hast asked: for in the abyss it lies
Of th' everlasting statute sunk so low,
That no created ken may fathom it.
And, to the mortal world when thou return'st,
Be this reported: that none henceforth dare
Direct his footsteps to so dread a bourn.
The mind, that here is radiant, on the earth
Is wrapt in mist. Look then if she may do
Below, what passeth her ability
When she is ta'en to heaven."

Are you a preacher, and therefore desirous to know what you ought to preach upon; or are you a critic or an editor looking for a text or some suggestion against sensational preaching? Listen to Beatrice who, after solving certain doubts which had entered Dante's mind, inveighs against those who unwittingly preach error and those who do not believe what they preach. Both, she complains, have deserted the known track of sage philosophy and have chosen by-ways of their own. And why? Because of damnable vanity, culpable ignorance, or worse cupidity. These preachers are eaten with a consuming love of singularity and a restless eagerness to shine.

"Yet this, offensive as it is, provokes
Heaven's anger less, than when the book of God
Is forced to yield to man's authority,
Or from its straightness warped: no reckoning made
What blood the sowing of it in the world
Has cost; what favor for himself he wins
Who meekly clings to it. The aim of all
Is how to shine: e'en they whose office is
To preach the gospel, let the gospel sleep."

Mere literary fireworks are exhibited and catchy stories

told in the pulpit — the sheep meanwhile returning from pasture "fed with wind." Christ bade his Apostles to go forth and teach, not impostures, but that divine truth the sound whereof "was mighty on their lips." Nor did they use any tricks, or artifices, or the meretricious elegancies of language to make religion attractive or even acceptable. No! In their warfare for the faith, gospel truth was their only spear and shield. But the preacher now provides himself with store of jests and gibes to keep up the interest and excite the unholy laughter of the vulgar. Avarice and cupidity cause him to extend over "credulous fools and dotards the hands of holy promise." In such vein speaks Beatrice, the mild, the gentle, the lovely, the happy-making Beatrice, but the knowing, the wise, and fearless Beatrice! Meditate upon her words, ye who preach from Christian pulpits. Her message is full of all kinds of human interest. ("Paradiso," C. XXIX, 85.)

Are you curious to know the condition of our bodies when, after the resurrection, they are ushered into the immensity of light and splendor, and are reunited with their souls? How these bodies will be perfected and glorified, and will become the occasion of increased blessedness? Solomon, in answering the question whether the substance of the soul will remain eternally clad in the garniture of light that it now blossoms in, says in part this:

"So long as the festival of Paradise shall last, so long will our love radiate around us this garment of light. Its brightness is in proportion to our ardor; our ardor is proportioned to our vision of God, and our vision is great in proportion as it receives grace above its own worth. When our shape shall be re-garmented with glorious

weeds of sanctified flesh we must, being thus complete, show yet more gracious. Wherefore that gratuitous light which God gives us and which enables us to see Him will be increased, and our vision of Him will be intensified, and our love and ardor shall be warmed and also our radiance which is but kindled by our fervor. But even as the coal which gives forth flame and by its vivid glow surpasses it, so that the coal is seen glowing through the flame, thus this effulgence which now encircles us will be vanquished in appearance by our fleshly robe which yonder earth now covers."

But mayhap this high discoursing upon souls and glorified bodies only whets your desire to see the angels who people the heavens. See them? Why, they are pure intelligences, sparkles instinct with life; they are breathing lights, glowing ardors. Dante sees them with "faces of flame and wings of gold," caroling about the mystic rose of paradise as bees amid vernal sweets. There they all breathe in warbled melodies their ever-blending threefold hosannas. They rank highest among created things. In every mansion of heaven you meet one or other of the nine choirs of one of the three great hierarchies into which they are divided. In his masterful treatment of angels Dante sets forth all the beauty of the doctrine of Denis the Areopagite upon this exalted subject. In a few remarks upon the merits of "Paradiso" one can only call attention to Dante's painting of angels as one of the finest touches in the picture he has drawn of what the inspired writers despaired to describe.

And lofty as are these purely spiritual substances, yet are they creatures and merely finite, and consequently there lies between them and God an infinite distance. How will the poet bridge over this seemingly impassable chasm and enter into the divine presence? Philosophy helps him to build the

bridge of Motion. Angels are movers of the physical and moral universe; but they, being themselves moved, must be moved by one who is the primal immovable Motor; and revelation tells reason that this Motor is God. And this Prime Motor and First Cause, continues Dante, beautifully setting the scholastic teachings into rhythmic verse all the while, this God must be a spiritual substance, must be essential power, force, wisdom, and love, one and indivisible in essence, and three-fold in person, as He has revealed it to us. He must be immense, eternal, immutable,— infinite goodness and infinite justice: all His attributes maintaining themselves in perfect and undisturbable equilibrium. This is why He is called the Primal Equation, the First Equality. Being absolutely independent and self-sufficient, there could be no necessity for His creating worlds. The reason of creation then is: "that his glory shining in his works might witness of itself to itself." That stupendous work, the Incarnation, which brings about the rehabilitation and redemption of man, was in view of the joint triumph of both mercy and justice.

And will Dante *see* God? Will he tell us how it feels when a mortal sets his eye upon the divinity which patriarchs could not "see and live"? Ushered into the empyrean, that vast amphitheatre of light all tremulous with the united splendors of all the heavens, that rendezvous of all the blessed, and all the shining orders of angels, that holy of holies of heaven itself in which God manifests His beauty and communicates His love most directly to all the elect who view Him and ardently sing His praise; ushered into this blissful company the immortal Dante saw afar off, as it were, a bril-

liant point of light, shining amid enringed circles of fire that glowed with flame most pure according as they were nearest that sparkle of essential truth. "Heaven and all nature, he is told, hang upon that point." These enringed fiery circles are the nine choirs of angels. From the central fire, the Godhead, issues a river of light in whose waves are bathed the elect.

Will the poet dare look upon that dazzling light? Will his eye withstand the sight? His vision having been miraculously strengthened through the good offices of Beatrice, St. Bernard, and the Queen of Angels, Dante approaches nearer and looks steadfastly upon the Deity's unveiled essence. And there, without any effort of reasoning or of memory — a thing that has no name among men — he becomes instantly enriched with most comprehensive knowledge and most expansive love. He sees in the surface of this central light the archetypal ideas of all substances, all modes, and all accidents, according to which worlds are fashioned. Peering into the inner depths of this eternal light, this abyss of radiance, he descries three equal circles, or rainbows, the second being the reflected splendor of the first; the third seeming flame issuing from the two others. Looking intently upon the second circle he first catches a glimpse of our humanity imaged therein, and then the full mystery of the human form fitted to the circle of a divine person is flashed upon his admiring gaze! He has seen God, three in one, and has beheld the mysterious union of a divine person with human nature. Further than this he cannot penetrate. "Here," he says, "vigor failed the towering fantasy."

Oh! ye who would, pagan-like, build man's littleness into divinity, see rather with Dante how God has dignified our humanity by uniting it so closely to Himself! See, believe, exult, and give thanks! Would you feed your soul upon the rapturous beauty of a thought as noble as it is ennobling, as sublime in its conception as it is poetical in its execution, and as soothing, sweet, comforting, hopeful, uplifting as it is beautiful and true, seek it not even in the divine Plato, but in the diviner Dante's "Paradiso."

And yet many a time and oft does this celestial pilgrim during the recital of his wonder-filled journey complain of the impossibility of forging speech to express all the beauty he beheld and the transports of love which he experienced. And this occurs not only when he ascends to the dizzying heights of God's supreme beauty, as we have but just now heard him declare, but on many other occasions does this same sense of overwhelming beauty, of loveliness quite unutterable, overpower the poet. For instance, he says, no muse could inspire in poet a strain lofty enough and thrilling enough to celebrate fittingly the witching, the imparadising smile of the evermore lovely Beatrice. If all he has hitherto said of her exquisite beauty were combined in one laudation, he continues, "'t were all too weak to furnish out this turn." Such was the increased brilliancy of Dante's happy and happy-making Beatrice at this point that the very remembrance of it "doth even now quite dispossess his spirit of itself." Again, of his vision of Mary, that lovely one of heaven, of the triumph of that queen, "whose visage most resembles Christ's," he says: "Had I a tongue in eloquence

as rich as is the coloring in fancy's loom 't were all too poor to utter the least part of that enchantment." Notwithstanding the abundance of deep impressions he does report, he constantly accuses memory of incapacity to recall the hundredth part of what he had experienced. Towards the end of his pilgrimage he utters a fervent prayer that his tongue may have power to relate to the future races of men but one sole particle of God's glory. All this, of course, is of a piece with the realism, the fervid intensity and prophetic earnestness which we found to be characteristics of Dante's manner, especially in the "Inferno."

And this leads me to remark, in concluding, that as to the exclusively literary merits of the "Paradiso," they will be found to consist largely in the poetic treatment of so many and of such abstract subjects as, for example, vows, poverty, justice, faith, hope, charity. We cannot fail to applaud the very judicious admixture of that realism which we have noticed in the other parts of the "Divine Comedy," that is, Dante's downright earnestness and his impressive tone of conviction which compel the reader to admit that the poet is dealing with realities and not with mere mental figments. There is running throughout a strong current of bracing eloquence and vivacious enthusiasm, especially in the longer speeches of Beatrice and in the speeches and prayers of the saints.

As to the moral value of the "Paradiso," *i. e.*, its powers to inspire and uplift men who are not wooden, nor only gross flesh, there is no doubt that the contemplation of such blessedness must fire the hearts of all with fondest hope, holiest

desire, loftiest aspiration; and this same earth-view of the celestial delights can but be most effectual in leading men to shun the vices that would rob them of the prospect of winning those rewards, and to cultivate the virtues which will insure them that bliss.

Finally, let me say that not to appreciate the spirituality of "Paradiso," or not to like this portion of the work because it is too spiritual, were an open confession that we are unable to see immaterial beauty; that we are bored by the company of angels; that we dislike entertainment with the saints; that our intellectual ken cannot sustain the contemplation of truth arrayed in such dazzling splendor, of goodness crowned with such shining merits, of beauty all radiant with so many charms; it were a confession that we hanker ever for tangible and visible material forms and the excitements of sensible delights; in a word, that our intellect too soon tires of high themes, that our reason cannot follow the course of lofty speculations, that our wills cannot be wooed by the love of spiritual excellence even when this is presented in its most alluring aspects; that we dislike the accents of prayer and the voice of saintliness; that our fancy is too unexercised to open its wings for such lofty flights, that it is so mundane it can only flit bat-like in the darkness and above the immediate surface of things earthly.

The "Paradiso" is the grand *Sursum Corda* of literature. Apart from our sacred books, there is nothing in all letters so adapted to fire men with admiration and yearning for the worlds of infinite light, of infinite splendor, of infinite beauty, and of infinite love.

CHAPTER V.

BEATRICE.

CONTENTS:—Secret of Woman's Power for Good.—Influence of Beatrice Upon Dante in Her Real and in Her Ideal Life.—Her Service to Him; Her Beauty and Goodness; Character of Dante's Love for Beatrice.

After reading the "Divine Comedy," one remains profoundly impressed with woman's power for good, with the potent, uplifting and sanctifying influence which she can exercise in manifold ways upon man. Other books tell us of Helen, Dido, Cleopatra, Armida, and other heroines whose fatal gift of beauty, unguarded by virtue's buckler, proved the instrument of their own debasement; and whose alluring charms arrested men bent upon the building of empires and diverted them from the immediate accomplishment of their high purposes.

But what exhilarating relief in that ever blessed trinity of heavenly dames in the "Divine Comedy," Beatrice, Mary, and Lucy, the assurance of whose gracious aid emboldens Dante triumphantly to face the perils of the realm of woe, to scale the cliffs of purgatory's mount, and to fly to the starry spheres! And how clearly outweighed is the wrongdoing of Francesca by the victorious lives and morally brac-

ing influence of such women as Nella, Lia, Rachel, Mathilda Pia, Cunizza, and Piccarda!

In the "Divine Comedy," woman is the inspiration of individual and social regeneration, the inspiration of progress towards the realization of the divinest ideals of human life; and because the "Divine Comedy" thus makes woman the inspirer of all those noblest efforts that man can make to become Godlike, it is rightly considered as the highest tribute sung to woman by the tuneful sons of men.

Beatrice is represented in the "New Life," which is but the prelude of the "Divine Comedy," as a lovely child of angelic beauty and goodness, who blossomed into the purest maidenhood and matured into the most benign womanhood. In this, her real life, she was in the eyes of all, and especially of Dante, the living exemplar of the teachings of divine wisdom and of the workings of heavenly grace, the very embodiment of all those varied and precious gifts that compel admiration and love.

Because this humble Florentine had exercised such a saving influence upon his own life, Dante's genius will enthrone her in his matchless song as the ideal woman whose beauty, goodness, and wisdom must ever lead the world to the most brilliant moral conquests. Here it becomes apparent that, if woman has been the occasion of man's original defection, she can become the inspirer of his courage to rise to the higher things whence he has fallen. Here Dante would have us understand that to a degree every woman can be and should be for men a principle of moral elevation.

Now if we were to ask ourselves what is the secret of this

all-subduing and all-conquering power of woman, we may find it on the surface in the native gentleness of her ways, in the shrinking modesty of her demeanor, as was the case with Beatrice in her real life; or again we may find that this magnetic force springs directly from her superior mental gifts which enable her to speak wisely upon great questions, as Beatrice does in her ideal life. For centuries she has lectured to wondering mankind like the most learned doctor upon the loftiest themes, the most momentous subjects that can engage the attention of man.

But if we seek yet further the cause why the appealing gentleness and modesty of a simple woman is so powerful, we shall find that it is the inherent goodness of the woman, whose gentleness is but the outward form of inward goodness, and whose modesty is but the veil that overshadows it. So, too, it is with the secret of her intellectual power to win and sway the minds and hearts of men. It is not only because she is brilliant and wise — men are already acquainted with wisdom — but it is because in her, wisdom is wedded with an innate graciousness, an interior worth and beauty and attractiveness of soul, an ever manifest desire to do kind things for others. Now, where men find goodness they give love.

Thus then one might say that all woman's power is that which results from goodness; it is the power to be loved or to make herself loved. This seems to be the natural, the necessary, the providential mission of woman: to win man to the right and just by the irresistible charm of her goodness.

Now, the more perfect this goodness is in wife, or mother, sister, fiancée, or teacher, *i. e.,* the more spiritual it is, the more faithfully it reflects the goodness of saints and of God, then also the more winsome will be the charm it will give to sweet modesty and to luminous wisdom as well.

It would be difficult to find in literature a more perfect type of the good, simple, modest, lovable woman than the young Beatrice of Dante's "New Life"; and I believe it is quite impossible to find anything approaching the type of the gracious and learned woman which Dante gives us in the Beatrice of the "Divine Comedy." And it is likewise impossible not to admit that this Beatrice, both in her earthly and in her heavenly life has exerted a powerful and beneficent influence upon man. Who runs may read in the "New Life" how entirely she captivated the soul of Dante, how she became the object of his poetic and fervorous worship, and how wholly Florence owned the gentle dictatorship of her moral beauty and power. Upon this stem of reality blossoms the ideal Beatrice of the "Divine Comedy"; and, if we consider what kindly service she there renders to Dante, what is the nature of her beauty and with what sort of love she inspires Dante, we may be able to appreciate in a measure the immense good that a perfect woman can accomplish in this sin-tossed world.

To teach man to be guided by reason and to trust in God is to prepare him for victory. This is precisely what Beatrice does for Dante in his sore dismay; she sends him Virgil, the symbol of reason, to guide him safely through the awful dangers that encompass him and the further trials that await him, to comfort him with the assurance of heavenly aid.

Beatrice, who symbolizes divine wisdom and love, descending from heaven, thus appeals to Virgil (type of reason) for her unfortunate friend (Inf. C. I, 59):

"O courteous shade of Mantua —
A friend, not of my fortune but myself,
On the wide desert in his road has met
Hindrance so great, that he through fear has turned.
. . . . "Speed now,
And by thy eloquent persuasive tongue,
And by all means for his deliverance meet,
Assist him. So to me will comfort spring;
I, who bid thee on this message forth,
Am Beatrice; from a place I come
Revisited with joy. Love brought me thence,
Who prompts my speech." . . . .

Referring to Mary, the type of divine clemency, and to Lucia, symbol of illuminating grace, Beatrice thus explains to Virgil their concern for Dante's safety (Inf. C. I, 93):

. . . . "In high heaven a blessed dame
Resides, who mourns with such effectual grief
That hindrance which I send thee to remove,
That God's stern judgment to her will inclines.
To Lucia calling, her she thus bespake:
'Now doth thy faithful servant need thy aid,
And I commend him to thee.' At her word
Sped Lucia, of all cruelty the foe,
And, coming to the place where I abode, ...
She thus addressed me: 'Thou true praise of God!
Beatrice! Why is not thy succor lent
To him, who so much loved thee, as to leave
For thy sake all the multitude admires?
Dost thou not hear how pitiful his wail,
Nor mark the death which in the torrent flood,
Swol'n mightier than a sea, him struggling holds?'
Ne'er among men did any with such speed
Haste to their profit, flee from their annoy
As, when these words were spoken, I came here,

> Down from my blessed seat, trusting the force
> Of thy pure eloquence, which thee and all
> Who have marked it, into honor brings."

Thus guided by the docile Virgil, Dante views the hideous ugliness and the horrifying punishment of sin. To sustain his waning energies, Beatrice sends him a green-clad angel, who baffles the infernal powers at the gates of Dis. It is the ever-present thought of those three "heavenly dames" who are interested in him that inspires him with confidence in Virgil, that upbears his courage, and enables him to continue his journey through all the soul-racking circles of human and angelic perversity. Thus while teaching him confidence in divine assistance she teaches him a salutary fear of God, the beginning of wisdom, by showing him the terrible punishment His justice inflicts upon sinners. She teaches his reason to believe.

It is she again who makes Virgil lead him up the purifying terraces of purgatory, acquaint him with God's mercy and inspire him with hope therein. And before she herself wafts him to the heavens, there to teach him the supreme lesson of love, she meets him in the terrestial paradise at the summit of purgatory's mount, and after reminding him of that love of the supreme good, which she on earth had ever inspired, and chiding him for his infidelities, she induces him to make a salutary confession of his errors, laves him in the cleansing waters of Lethe, makes him sip of Eunoè's vivifying wave and thus renders him "pure and apt for mounting to the stars."

But it is in the heavenly paradise that she reveals herself to him in all the glowing splendor and warmth of her God-

reflecting beauty, goodness, and wisdom, and that she elicits from him those intense love-protestations which can be deserved by or addressed to none but God or the saints who are his glorified images. From star to star she takes him, making him view the triumph of virtue and the magnificent rewards which divine love hath prepared for the righteous. From the rich fund of her wisdom she enlightens him upon many vexing subjects; with infinite care she sustains his oft overpowered vision, driving the motes from his eyes by the resplendence of her own, and cheering him with comforting words.

Dante's own acknowledgement of all the gracious offices she has done him may be found epitomized in the prayer of thanksgiving which he addresses to her in the 31st Canto of "Paradiso." (70-80):

> "O lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest;
> Who, for my safety, hast not scorned, in hell
> To leave the traces of thy footsteps marked;
> For all mine eyes have seen, I to thy power
> And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave
> Thou hast to freedom brought me; and no means
> For my deliverance apt hast left untried.
> Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep:
> That when my spirit, which thou madest whole,
> Is loosened from this body, it may find
> Favor with thee."

Dante, thus advanced through the gracious offices of Beatrice, views the revealed splendor of the divine essence. He tastes the supremest bliss that is reserved for open minds and docile hearts. Thus, too, must those men become spiritualized and apt for heroic achievements in active life and intense delight in contemplative life who hearken to the

inspiration of one who, like Beatrice, is the impersonation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty.

Beauty, which is the power to please, is always the accompaniment of truth, the power to convince, and of goodness, the power to attract. Beatrice was beautiful. It would seem that in the "New Life" her beauty was something too sacred to be described; its effects, however are frequently the theme of young Dante's lyrical effusions. In the "Divine Comedy" the comeliness of her person, the ravishing beauty of her face when she smiled, the dazzling brilliancy of her eyes, and the overwhelming happiness which the sight of her caused him, are frequently the subject of his most fervid praise and exultation. In his eagerness to gaze upon her he plunges through the lake of fire in purgatory in order to reach the opposite bank where Beatrice awaits him. Here he sees her vested in the symbolical colors of sacred science, amid a brilliant escort of beauteous nymphs and holy personages whom she eclipses all in brightness, "as far surpassing even her former self in loveliness as on earth all others she surpassed."

Regretful of Dante's infidelities she reproachfully reminds him of her beauty while on earth, saying:

> . . . . "Never didst thou spy
> In art or nature aught so passing sweet
> As were the limbs that in their beauteous frame
> Enclosed me in, and are now scattered in dust.
> What afterward of mortal should thy wish have tempted?"
> — (Purg. C. XXXI, 46.)

Here Beatrice speaks figuratively, as divine science or theology, the exact symmetry and fine adjustment of whose parts reflect the splendor of truth, which is a beauty never

to be abandoned for "the slight girl" beauty of philosophy "or other gauds as transient as they are vain."

So captivated was Dante by the vision of her beauty here that he says: "A thousand fervent wishes riveted mine eyes upon her beaming eyes which reflected the sacred symbol of Christ.— Full of amaze was I and joyous, while my soul fed on the viand, whereof still desire grows with satiety." (Purg. C. XXXI, 118)

In "Paradiso," Beatrice, the wise, is kind, gracious, maternal, piteous, and above all beautiful. He thus describes her beauty when leaving the heaven of the sun for Mars:

> . . . . "But so fair
> So passing lovely, Beatrice showed,
> Mind cannot follow it, nor words express
> Her infinite sweetness."
> — (Parad. C. XIV, 73.)

Not even all the glorious sights that greet his eyes in the heavens can diminish his appreciation of her perfect beauty, with which he confesses himself entranced in the midst of the grand array of valorous crusaders and heroic warriors of the planet Mars. After Beatrice has reminded him that she dwells near God from whom all comfort comes, he looked up to her:

> "And in the saintly eyes what love was seen,
> I leave in silence here, not through distrust
> Of my words only, but that to such bliss
> The mind remounts not without aid. Thus much
> Yet may I speak; that, as I gazed on her,
> Affection found no room for other wish.
> While the everlasting pleasure that did full
> On Beatrice shine, with second view
> From her fair countenance my gladdened soul

Contented. Vanquishing me with a beam
Of her soft smile she spake: 'Turn thee and list,
These eyes are not thy only paradise.'"
— (Parad. CXVIII, 6.)

Arrived in the heaven of Saturn he says:

"Again mine eyes were fixed on Beatrice;
And, with mine eyes, my soul that in her looks
Contentment found."
— (Parad. XXI, 1.)

"He who could know how richly I had fed
Upon her blessed countenance, thus employed
In other care wherein I so much joyed,
Would comprehend how willingly I was led
To obey the mandate of my heavenly guide
By weighing one against the other side."
— (Parad. XXI, 19, Wilstach's Translation.)

In Canto XXXIII he thus describes her love and joy in showing him the triumphal hosts of Christ:

"Meseemed,
That, while she spake, her image all did burn;
And in her eyes such fulness was of joy,
As I am fain to pass unconstrued by."

When she deigns to smile on him, deeming him sufficiently prepared to sustain her smile, he is so overjoyed that he exclaims: "Had I all the tuneful tongues of all the muses, I could not in my song shadow forth unto the thousand parcel of the truth that saintly smile and how much it made her holy face purely bright." (Parad. XXIII, 53.)

"I looked into the beauteous eyes, wherewith love made the cord to ensnare me, the eyes of her who doth imparadise my soul." (Par. C. XXVII, 1.)

Finally in the 30th canto Dante takes his leave of Beatrice speaking thus poetically of her unspeakable beauty and loveliness in empyrean:

"If all, that hitherto is told of her,
Were in one praise concluded, 't were all too weak
To furnish out this turn. Mine eyes did look
On beauty, such, as I believe in sooth
Not merely to exceed our human; but
That save its maker, none can to the full
Enjoy it. At this point, o'erpowered I fail,
Unequal to my theme; as never bard
Of buskin or of sock hath failed before.
For as the sun doth to the feeblest sight,
E'en so remembrance of that witching smile
Hath dispossessed my spirit of itself.
Not from that day, when on this earth I first
Beheld her charms, up to that view of them,
Have I with song applausive ceased,
To follow: but now follow them no more;
My course here bounded, as each artist's is,
When it doth touch the limit of his skill."

Thus eloquently does Dante celebrate the unearthly, the ideal beauty of Beatrice. But it is safe to say that the "Divine Comedy" is primarily the song of Dante's own ecstatic love of Beatrice. What are the characters of this love, how it is connected with the goodness of Beatrice, what effects it produces upon Dante we will now briefly see.

Dante's not only persevering but ever increasing love of Beatrice is no mere childish caprice or poetic fancy; it is even more than the purest platonic love, whose object is the natural beauty and excellence alone of the person loved. It is more than this, I say, even when this philosophic love, free as it is from the least tinge of sensuality, becomes the veritable worship of a highly intellectual soul. Dante's love is more than the romantic and all consecrated love of valorous knight for his fair lady, a love indeed which devotes all its energies to the high-minded service of feminine worth.

Dante's love is all these loves; but it is yet a truer love

than these, a love even more spiritual than these, stronger than these, a love that is constant and lasting and strong as death; a love born in childhood and ever increasing and spiritualizing itself and glowing with purer and clearer flame as the lover advanced toward the tomb; a love born of the esteem which he conceived for the sanctity of Beatrice, a love which ever inspired him with chivalrous respect for her, a love which was as tender as it was strong, as generous as it was holy, wholesome, and sanctifying. It was a real love, for he tells us in the "New Life" that this love made him tremble in every limb, that it made him weep for very joy, that this love made him supremely happy in being the object of the gracious and courteous salutation of this most noble and gentle lady. And yet, it was an ideal love, free from all the regretful changes attendant upon the love of an object which itself ever changes, and changes not for the better. A perfect object alone, God and the saints, can inspire such love, a love that is elevated above all that is transient and ephemeral, a love which weeps and is dismayed only because it discovers it has not loved enough and exclaims: "Too late have I known thee; too late have I loved thee!"

The love which Beatrice kindled in Dante was a sanctifying love. He relates in the "New Life" that the very thought of Beatrice withheld him from evil and made him follow the path of virtue in his youth. The worshipful veneration which this lady inspired him preserved him from those disgraceful sins into which youths are prone to fall upon the occasion of what they are pleased to call "their love affairs." What a profanation of the sacred word "love!"

Speaking of the youth Dante, in whom "all better habits wondrously thrived," Beatrice says (Purg. XXX, 122):

> "For I showed
> My youthful eyes and led him by their light
> In upright walking."

Dante himself proclaims the saving power of her love (Purg. XXXI, 31) where he confesses the cause of his errors after she had disappeared from his mortal vision and he had momentarily neglected her blessed memory:

> "Thy fair looks withdrawn
> Things present, with deceitful pleasures, turned
> My steps aside."

But no creature of mere plastic beauty, ever so perfect and enchanting, no creature of merely human moral and intellectual excellence, could have provoked the more than platonic and chivalrous love of Dante. Beatrice was in Dante's eyes infinitely more than this; her perfection, her virtue was not of the merely natural, but of the supernatural order, and hence his love also was of a supernatural kind. She ever reminded him of God and of holiness, because her beauty was a reflection of the divine beauty. In life she was a perfect model of all the maidenly and womanly virtues; she was so angelically fair she seemed rather a child of heaven than of earth; she was pious, chaste, modest, reserved, kind, courteous, in a word the perfect Christian woman.

What man, with Dante's observing eye and open mind, and especially with Dante's intense poetic temperament, with his deep Christian convictions and his keen appreciation of what is divinely fair, could fail to be profoundly impressed by the many charms of this beautiful and saintly young woman?

Countless others less sensitive than Dante to the subduing influence of beauty and goodness had themselves yielded to the irresistible magnetism of this living saint, and followed her at a distance in righteous paths.

After her death Dante's religious sentiment is still more purified and becomes the worship that one pays to a saint, to a glorified soul, to a friend of God. His body is on earth but his soul is with Beatrice who is with the angels and with God.

Long and delightful no doubt were the nights which the poet spent in contemplation of her among the angelic choirs and in God's presence.— It was during these meditations that his soul became charged with such lofty thought and intense love that he felt he could say of her what had never been said of any other daughter of man.

He would idealize her, he would beautify her; she will become the speaking symbol of sacred science, a type of wisdom and love; she will become the type of beatified goodness, whose beauty is all supernatural, and because it is such, it is so transcendent and overpowering that her imparadising smile can not be sustained without some extraordinary grace from God, and her radiant brilliancy can never be adequately proclaimed in human speech.

As when in his youth, ensconced perhaps in an angle of the street he caught a furtive glance of her as she passed like a white vision of more than earthly loveliness, he thought he had seen the limit of all bliss; so also in heaven, when turning his ken from the beamy lights that glowed on every hand, he looked at Beatrice, he became, as it were, so transfixed with happiness at the sight of her, he in utter and helpless delight

so fixedly riveted his eager vision upon her heaven-reflecting eyes that she must bid him remember that not in her eyes alone is all paradise.

> "Turn thee and list,
> These eyes are not thy only paradise."

What a very revel of love is this! "Paradiso" especially celebrates the sacred ecstasy of this superhuman love; and the rythmic song ceases when Dante, looking upon the unveiled beauty and loveliness of God, whose reflection in Beatrice had already called forth the supremest accents of his lyre, feels powerless to utter the unutterable.

Such then was the service of Beatrice in behalf of Dante, such was her beauty, and such the holy flame with which she purified him. Like the saints she figures in literature and before the world as one of those perfect models those must look up to who would lead the higher and more perfect life and travel Godward. She will teach all as she taught Dante, the supreme lessons of faith, of hope, and of love: to believe the truest things, to hope for the highest and to love the best.

Would that the world had fuller store of such beautiful, pious, modest, saintly maidens; of such faithful, loving, lovable and wise women as Beatrice! The earth would soon be reconverted into an Eden. If mothers had the same sweet tenderness for their precious charges that Beatrice had for Dante, the same kindly readiness to help, the same wisdom to advise, of what universal and most devoted filial piety would they not at once become the object!

If wives were as faithful and loving, as forgiving and yet as righteously jealous of the entire love of their plighted

spouses as was Beatrice towards the erring Dante, how inextricably enmeshed in the toils of their fascinating goodness they would ever keep their husbands the glad captives of love; and how ever gloriously they would win back to duty their sometimes erring lords!

If fair young maidens and fiancées were as reserved and thoroughly good as was the young Beatrice, what a magic circle of intangible holiness they would thus cast round about their own sacred persons and what respectful love and veneration they would inspire with and obtain from every youth! If every sister had the same kindness towards her brothers, and every teacher the same love-inspired wisdom to guide her pupils which Beatrice displayed in soothing and guiding Dante, what an Eden of bliss would be the home and what a golden ladder of perfection would be the school! If every woman were thus good she would compel men to love her and in loving her man would love only that which is purest, holiest, worthiest and best on earth and would thus better serve God and man, while growing pinions to soar to the starry spheres.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. LUCY.

CONTENTS: — Story of the Young Maiden's Life.— Patroness of Physical and Spiritual Sight.— Symbol of Illuminating Grace.

> "Mine eyes do I send thee
> By this messenger old;
> Receive them then from me
> In this bright urn of gold."

In some such simple strain as this, pious Syracusans at one time were wont to commemorate the heroic act of a Sicilian maiden, round about whom legend had blended the glamour of romance with the aureola of sanctity.

Even after we have made due allowance for the fond addition of fervid piety and lively imagination, enough remains in the lives of these early Christian virgins, Cecilia, Agnes, Agatha, Lucy, and a whole white legion of others, to call forth our wonder and our worshipful reverence. What lovely types they are of every womanly accomplishment and of exalted Christian virtue!

It is ever a delight and a help to look upon these models, as they glow like stars in the distant firmament of the early Christian ages.

Let us to-day consider the various circumstances of the life of St. Lucy, and see how she came to occupy so prominent a place, so dignified a rôle in the "Divine Comedy."

This glorious virgin and martyr was born in Syracuse, Sicily, and was from her infancy reared in the doctrine of Christ. While yet a child, she vowed her virginity to God; but this being unknown to her parents, she had already been affianced to a young nobleman of her native town. Upon the occasion of a pilgrimage to Catania, Lucy informed her mother, Eutychia, of her heavenly espousals, and of her intention to bestow all her goods on the poor. Eutychia promised to allow her child to follow her own pious inclinations.

But the young man, a pagan, came upon the scene; he demanded his betrothed and her wealth. He learned from her own lips the truth. His passionate entreaties were of no avail to move Lucy from her purpose. Her explanations, on the other hand, failed to satisfy the disappointed youth. A lovers' quarrel ensued. They parted.

This young girl had not yet reached her fifteenth year. How strong and efficacious must have been the grace of Christ within her virginal soul! How nobly heroic appeared her virtue in the trials which awaited her!

Enraged by the rejection of his proffered love, her pagan suitor sought a cowardly revenge. He hastened before the Governor of Syracuse, Paschasius, and exclaimed: "Lucy is a hateful Christian! Abominable Christians! they know not even the name of love; their breath, like the icy winds of the north, blights the fairest flowers of human affection; their presence is a plague, a pestilence, a danger. Lucy is one of these, your honor. She must die. Humanity and the safety of the republic cry out for her death."

This was during the fierce persecution of Diocletian. Pas-

chasius called the youthful maiden into his hated presence and submitted her to a long interrogation, during which, with fearless courage and unflinching constancy, she persisted in confessing, "Yes, I am a Christian and will die for my faith."

"Not yet," exclaimed the hell-inspired judge, "but go, I bid thee, consort with the shameless profligates that fill the haunts of carnal pleasure; there, thy virtue prove." . . . Rough soldiers, ignoble slaves, laid their violent hands upon the spotless maiden to lead her away to the dens of shame. But God baffled their efforts, and to their amazement and despair, Lucy was rendered as immovable as the marble pillars of the proudest temple, as intangible as a ray of sunshine. "Then," exclaimed they, "she must be some accursed witch; burn this damned offspring of hell." They applied fire, but the flames touched her not.

Furious at being thus baffled, her tormentors, blind to the evident intervention of God, cast her into a loathsome prison.

God, who had made His power shine through her, would not deny her the glory of martyrdom. By dint of ill-treatment and cruel wounds, her jailers finally succeeded in quenching the pure fire of her earthly life, and her bright and sinless soul winged its flight heavenward to dwell among the luminous angels that encircle God's throne.

Such a one was not likely soon to pass from the memory and veneration of men who love virtue. Was she not a shining example of every maidenly virtue? Could she not, as her name indicated, she, Lucy, the illuminating virgin, light up those whose passions obscure their vision and make

darksome and uninviting the path of virtue? Certainly she must pity and gently assist all those who are in need of light. In the fervor of their piety, Christians, along the course of centuries, wove about her name various kinds of wonderful legends. She was even thought to have plucked out her eyes and sent them in a golden cup to her persecutor.

Having then suffered in her eyes she was invoked by all who were afflicted with any distemper of the eyes. In the days of Dante she had become an object of widespread veneration. Everywhere her shrines were thronged with eager devotees, who sought at her hands spiritual and physical light.

And was not Dante himself at one time among those who invoked her aid? Very certain it is that after the death of Beatrice, the poet sought consolation in philosophy with such intensity that his sight became impaired. In his affliction he asked and obtained relief from St. Lucy.

No wonder, then, that, knowing the life she had led, and conscious of a personal debt of gratitude towards her, Dante accords her such an exalted station among the blessed, and assigns her the performance of such gracious offices throughout his own journeyings in the invisible worlds.

We know that Lucy is given frequent and honorable mention in the "Divine Comedy," and is assigned a rôle quite befitting an illuminating maiden. It is even she "of all cruelty the foe," who, at the request of Mary, directs Beatrice to hasten from high heaven to the assistance of Dante, lost in the dark forests of error and sin. And is it not upon the joint assistance of these three heavenly maidens that the whole action of the poem rests? St. Lucy is Illuminating

Grace. Again, when Dante had fallen asleep in the valley below the Mount of Purgatory, St. Lucy appears and says to Virgil: "I am Lucy; suffer me to take this man; easier so his way shall speed."[1] She bears him up, and as the day dawns and Dante awakens she vanishes, leaving him with Virgil at the gate of purgatory. Thus, you see, here again she fulfills kindly offices, and is ever attended by a light which shows the way.

But a torch-bearer not only lights up the smooth path; he must also point out the obstacles. In this rôle St. Lucy appears as "a dame of semblance holy," revealing to Dante the loathsome character of vice.[2]

Finally, when the poet has reached the highest realm, where dwell, nearest to God, the most luminous of His saints, there he sees Lucy, at whose behest Beatrice, his lady, had sped when he had closed his eyes on the edge of ruin.[3]

By introducing her in his deathless song, the immortal bard of Florence has done more to perpetuate St. Lucy's fame than if he had built to her honor a monument of stone, strong as an Egyptian pyramid, beautiful as a Gothic cathedral. In the swift-flowing words of his magic epic he has sent her name coursing down the stream of ages, on to the end of time.

Magnificent tribute of gratitude! Splendid offering to the ever-winsome loveliness of virtue! Great poet, thou dost make us admire her! But the eloquent Chrysostom bids us not to praise the saints unless we are ready to imitate them.

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[1] Purg. C. IX. 50.
[2] Purg. C. XIX. 25.
[3] Parad. C. XXXII. 123.

Then must we, since we have praised her, like her and through her become shining examples of integrity, of moral soundness, examples of that mutual helpfulness which makes men bear one another's burden, and leads Christian souls to the sun-lit gates of heavenly Jerusalem.

> "Lead kindly light; amid the encircling gloom,
> Lead thou me on."

. . . . . .

CHAPTER VII.

THE MADONNA.

CONTENTS: — MARY IN CHRISTIAN ART AND LETTERS.— MARY TYPE OF DIVINE ASSISTANCE.— HER POWER TO WIN FAVOR.— HER MATERNAL SOLICITUDE.— QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

Ever since the advent of Christ and the diffusion of His doctrines throughout the world it has been the ambition of poet and sage, artist and warrior, to lay the tribute of their genius at the shrine of the most beautiful of the children of men, the wise, the heroic, the meek and just Nazarene, the Man God. In Him all humanity is ransomed. In Him manhood is specially honored. But while they look upon Christ as glorifying manhood, scholars and artists have not been so blinded by the dazzling brightness of the "Light of the World" as not to descry very near Him His mother, Mary, who gave Him to the world, who is thereby exalted above every other creature, Mary, in whom all womankind is ennobled and consecrated.

How miraculously blended in this favored daughter of Eve are those two proudest attributes of womanhood, virginity and maternity! Where else could the poet or artist look for a more perfect model, a more inspiring ideal?

Be it to the everlasting credit and glory of those creators of the splendid world of art, to have thus faithfully caught

the clear lines of the Divine hand in Mary, and to have given to the world a Mary who lives in marble, breathes on the painted canvas, speaks from the printed page. Thus have they kept her before the womanhood of all times as the most perfect type of all womanly virtues.

How much and how excellently they have wrought, all the world knows. Travel through Europe and the Catholic countries of America; in every city and village, the statue or picture of Mary is found adorning public places, and from some lofty pillars her statue guards the people. Splendid basilicas are raised to her honor; the humblest hamlet has its chapel of Mary, and through the country are scattered her wayside shrines as so many resting-places of the soul.

The monasteries, the churches, and the art galleries, those repositories where are treasured up the highest achievements of genius, reveal to the astonished beholder the modest Annunciations of Fra Angelico, the angelic Assumptions of Murillo, the tenderly maternal Madonnas of Raphael, and countless other such triumphs of Mary in art as are the despair of modern artists.

Even the Catacombs, after twenty silent centuries, proclaim most unmistakably how early Christian artists honored the Mother of Christ. And have not poets too celebrated her in songs? Did not regal pope and humble monk write hymns to the Virgin Mother? Have not the saints and scholars enriched the liturgy of the Church with most sweet and edifying canticles to the Queen of Angels? Byron himself could not resist the inspiration there is in her very name. Listen to his song:

"Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer;
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love;
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove."

No wonder that the great Catholic poet of the Catholic Middle Ages should introduce in his immortal song and glorify for all ages to come that most perfect woman, the Virgin Mother of Christ. No wonder that he represented her to us, such as his Christian fervor prompted him, and as we too love to contemplate her. He has then made her gracious, kindly, benign, clement, humble yet queenly, virginal in her spotless purity, and loving and lovable as mothers alone can be. Let us follow him throughout his journeyings in the spirit world, and catch a few glimpses of Mary in such guise as the poetic soul of Dante saw her.

We shall hear the sweet music of his lyre as he sings praises and invocations to her, and hails the Morning Star, the Mystic Rose, the Mother of God, the Sorrowing Mother, the Comfort of the Afflicted, and the Help of Christians, and crowns this fairest of all creatures with a rich litany of the most endearing titles.

We shall see that in his most explicit and frequent presentations of Mary, the poet paints her as the heavenly source of help and favor, as Virgin Mother of Christ, and as the Queen of Heaven, now enjoying amidst the acclamations of the angels and saints the reward of her humility.

You are already familiar with the solicitude she manifested for Dante's safety, when, as Virgil relates in the opening

canto of the "Inferno," the wandering poet had strayed into a dark forest that was alive with dangerous wild beasts; when, in other words, this weak man was surrounded by lust, ambition, and avarice.

Behold Mary from high heaven bending looks of tender compassion upon this erring mortal. Mary, representing Divine Clemency, sends to his rescue Illuminating Grace (St. Lucy), Divine Science (Beatrice), and Human Wisdom (Virgil). How eloquently the poet speaks of her! Listen to Virgil, who, in order to encourage Dante to pursue his journey, tells him that three heavenly maidens are sending him assistance. For of Mary's kindness and singular power Beatrice had spoken thus to Virgil:

> "In high heaven a blessed dame
> Resides, who mourns with such effectual grief
> That hindrance, which I send thee to remove,
> That God's stern judgment to her will inclines."

Had Dante told us nothing more of Mary than this: "God's stern judgment to her will inclines," it had been sufficient to establish the high rôle Mary plays in the salvation of mankind. See how Dante's despondency vanishes by the assurance of the succor he would receive from this trinity of heavenly maidens, Mary, Lucia, and Beatrice! And were not his hopes realized? How successfully he passed through the dread realm of the damned! How gratefully he acknowledges the gracious help of this blessed dame who mourns with such effectual grief the hindrances and trials of weak mortals that she inclines God's stern judgment to her will!

Follow the poet through purgatory, ascend with him through paradise, and see how often he recounts Mary's

solicitude for us erring mortals, painting her as the dispenser of the divine mercies, extolling her as Mother of God and enthroning her as Queen of Angels. On his entrance to the purgatorial region, he was accosted by Sordello, who held converse with him: but as Sordello is conducting the poets across the vale, Dante, surprised at the imploring legions of spirits, beheld two green-clad angels of hope descend, whose brightness for mortal eye was too much.

"From Mary's bosom both are come," exclaims Sordello, "as a guard over the vale, 'gainst him who hither tends, the serpent." (Purg. VIII, 36.)

Through all the vicissitudes of Dante's journeying Mary never failed to succor him with a fond care that surpassed all human expectation.

In purgatory the innumerable souls whom Dante saw, with one accord sang out the invocation, "Blessed Mary, pray for us!"[1] These holy, but needy, souls recall with praise her gracious intervention at the wedding feast of Cana, when she intimated to Jesus "they have no wine"; and how, yielding to her solicitation, He wrought His first miracle.[2] How potent, then, is she to succor those who are in need!

They, too, poor souls, thirst for the wine of Divine mercy.

Dante continues his upward course and is surrounded by spirits wondering at his substantial form, and asking him how he came thither "without yet being entered into the inextricable toils of death." They pressed on every side and marveled how the sun was broken on the earth wherever

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[1] Purg. XIII. 45.
[2] Purg. XV. 87.

he moved. He no longer holds them in suspense, but explains that he has found favor with one in heaven who with light divine has piloted him across the Stygian pool and guarded him against the serpent in the vale, leading to purgatory, and continues still to guard him through the countless difficulties that strew his path:

> "There is a dame on high who wins for us
> This grace by which my mortal through your realm
> I bear."[1]

This gracious lady is none else than Mary. Throughout the entire poem examples of the efficacy of Mary's intercession are not lacking, and the millions of suffering souls in purgatory sufficiently attest this.

One invocation to Mary is sufficient to insure our salvation.

Among the many Dante met in purgatory was Buonconte, who, in the heat of battle, was pierced in the throat, and fled, bloodying the plain, until speech and sight failed him, and he died with Mary's name upon his lips. God's angel took his soul, and left his body to Satan.[2] The devil being cheated of his valued prize, wreaked vengeance on the body, roughly casting the useless freight into the river Arno. Buonconte had led a very reckless life; yet Mary's name on his lips, as the soul left the body, saved him from eternal perdition.

To bring more vividly before the mind of the reader the maternal tenderness of Mary, Dante artfully relates that touching episode, the finding of the Child in the temple. In an ecstatic vision the poet beholds:

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[1] Purg. XXVI, 52.
[2] Purg. V, 97.

"A dame whose sweet demeanor did express
A mother's love, who said, 'Child, why hast Thou
Dealt with us thus? Behold, thy sire and I
Sorrowing have sought Thee.'"[1]

Can man conceive a more beautiful and endearing spectacle than the poet here brings to our minds? Mark the sweetness of the reproof of the Virgin Mother! What infinite concern she manifests for the Child Jesus! What motherly tenderness she displays! What a noble lesson she teaches! What inspiring thoughts she enkindles, which should find a responsive chord in the hearts of all mothers! Even thus does Mary love her adopted children.

Through his wanderings, Dante shows us the solicitude Mary has for those in need, as the kindest and most loving of mothers. She watched over him with tenderest care in the most perilous moments, in having two heavenly messengers guard him when danger surrounded him; and in the gloomy recesses of purgatory, when that horrid darkness overspread the murky atmosphere, and even the shade of Virgil could render him no assistance, Mary's maternal love pierced the gloom and illumined his path with the dazzling splendor of the noon-day sun. And the idea of her divine maternity often recurs.

While Beatrice conducts Dante to heaven, he is overpowered by her beauty. She thus chides him for admiring her:

"Why doth my face," said Beatrice, "thus
Enamor thee, as that thou dost not turn
Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming
Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the rose,
Wherein the Word Divine was made incarnate."[2]

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[1] Purg. XV, 86.
[2] Parad. C. XXIII, 68.

Noble testimony of woman in behalf of a greater woman! Mary is the fair Rose exhaling the odor of His Divine Essence, in which all who breathe shall be preserved from eternal death. Her countenance is lit by the rays of hope, and her attitude bespeaks to all maternal affection and virginal sweetness. If Dante is so captivated by Beatrice's enchanting beauty, what must Mary's be, adorned with the twofold gem of virginity and maternity?

The dignity and power of Mary in heaven, Dante also unveils, exhibiting to us the Mother in synod high with the Son, holding the proud place of mother in the heavenly household. Dante imploringly beseeches us in his contemplation of Mary:

> "Now raise thy view
> Unto the visage most resembling Christ;
> For in her splendor only shalt thou win
> The power to look on Him."[1]

Here Dante teaches that through Mary shall we obtain the power to look upon the Divine Being and enjoy the beatific vision.

St. Bernard supplicates Mary that Dante may behold His Divine Majesty. This is granted. Hearken to a few words of this inimitable prayer to the Divine Mother.

> "O, Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son!
> * * * * * *
> Ennobler of thy nature, so advanced
> In thee, that its great Maker did not scorn
> To make Himself His own creation;
> * * * * * *
> Here thou to us, of charity and love
> Art as the noonday torch; and art, beneath,
> To mortal men, of hope a living spring.
> * * * * * *

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[1] Parad. C. XXXII, 74.

. . . . Not only him, who asks,
Thy bounty succors; but doth freely oft
Forerun the asking. Whatsoe'er may be
Of excellence in creatures, pity mild,
Relenting mercy, large munificence,
All are contained in thee."[1]

Again and again we are made to behold Mary in heaven, garbed in the raiment of celestial royalty, surrounded by innumerable bands of holy virgins, whilst soaring aloft myriads of angels chant:

"Long as the joys of paradise shall last,
Our love shall shine around that raiment bright."

The holy virgins in response take up the strain and echo Mary's name with a fervor that never had entered into the heart of man.

We behold the Virgin Queen enthroned beside the One she bore, while the countless bands of saints and angels vie with each other in showing her honor, in rejoicing in her queenly grace.

As the gentle violet and fair lily, after being suffused with the dews of heaven, open out their petals to the warm rays of the morning's sun, so now exult the white legions of angels and all the fervent band through zealous love for Mary. Now they halt, as each and all have caught the harmony of the strain, and sing "Regina Cœli:"

. . . . "At their glee,
And carol, smiles the Lovely One of heaven,
That joy is in the eyes of all the blest."

Truly, then, may we say that Dante has compassed in verse what artists have achieved with brush and chisel; he has

[1] Parad. C. XXXIII, 1, 38.

presented to the world a type of womanhood so perfect that a contemplation of it is a perennial source of consolation and delight.

Had Dante done nothing else than paint for us his charming trinity of the heavenly ladies, Mary, Lucia, and Beatrice, he would have deserved well of the ages, and especially of our modern age, which needs to have set before its eyes such winsome types of true, grand, beautiful, tender, modest, and pure womanhood.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREE NYMPHS.

CONTENTS: — Symbolism of Colors.— Dante's Faith; Its Nature, Its Basis, Object and Rewards.— Dante's Hope; to What it Tends and in What it is Rooted; Dante's Philosophy of Christian Love. —The Power of Good to Draw the Will, Motives for Loving God and All Creatures.

After reaching the fresh mossy green and the shady bowers of the terrestrial paradise on the sun-illumined summit of the Mountain of Purgatory, Dante, while treading the pliant grass that overspreads the borders of a crystal stream, has a marvelous vision: he sees advancing, with peans of celestial music, a long and gloriously brilliant procession of majestic personages all visibly written "triumphant." These personages, and various other living figures, symbolize the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the books of the Old and New Testaments; and they are followed by the two-natured griffon, the symbol of Christ, which draws the beautiful triumphal car of the Church, upon which appears Beatrice, "a virgin in white veil, with olive wreath, and beneath green mantle, robed in hue of living flame." And while this lovely maiden, this imperial mistress of divine science, wears the symbolical colors of the theological virtues, her flower-strewn chariot is attended by three joyous damsels whom Dante so describes

that it is impossible not to recognize in them the trinity of theological graces. He says:

> "Three nymphs,
> At the right wheel, came circling in smooth dance:
> The one so ruddy that her form had scarce
> Been known within a furnace of clear flame;
> The next did look as if the flesh and bones
> Were emerald; snow, new-fallen, seemed the third.
> Now seemed the white to lead, the ruddy now;
> And from her song, who led, the others took
> Their measure, swift or slow."[1]

Now, according to the canons of symbolism, the white-arrayed nymph is Faith, the red-garmented one is Charity, and the green-vested one is Hope. That Dante calls these virtues nymphs at all is an apt piece of poetical artifice, and something not to be wondered at in him, who lived at a time when mythological notions floated still largely in the popular mind, and could be easily chastened and made fit for the more beautiful and effective expression of Christian thought. This dignified personification of the theological virtues could but be universally admired and popularly applauded. It was one way of teaching the people to love these virtues. The nymphs of old mythology were conceived to be beneficent goddesses, endowed with perpetual youthfulness, beauty, and strength. They were intermediate beings between the gods and men and were known for their friendly services to mortals. They were believed to have power to do many things permitted to be done only by the gods; and, in this respect, Dante already indicates the supernatural character of the theological virtues by calling them nymphs. These gentle deities were

[1] Purg. XXIX, 115.

also the declared enemies of the wanton satyrs, and for this other reason, since faith, hope, and charity are also the avowed foes of Satan, are they aptly represented in the fancied forms of nymphs. It is no doubt in this improved sense of the word that Shakespeare applies it to the sweet *Ophelia.* When *Hamlet* discovers her at prayer, he pleads to her as to an intercessory deity, and there is implied in the title he gives her more than a dignified compliment:

> "Nymph, in thy orisons
> Be all my sins remembered."

Furthermore, we see that these nymphs of Dante are decked each in the color that best suits her nature and functions. Now, of course, the adoption of this or that color to signify this or that object or idea is a matter largely conventional. But there exists, indeed, a language of colors, a language of flowers, a language of music, as well as a language of articulate sounds.

Why should the Nymph of Faith be dressed in white? We associate white with what is pure, untainted, innocent, happy; so is faith — simple, cheerful, trustful, unquestioning. White is not strictly one color, for it is a combination of all colors; so faith is not only one particular kind of knowledge, but implies and embraces all kinds of knowledge. White reflects to the eye the rays of light unseparated; so faith, likewise, not being prismatic, reflects back to the mind all the undecomposed truths that radiate in the white light of revelation. In a word, because white is the color of light, and light is the medium of knowledge, white is aptly assumed as the vesture and symbol of faith.

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Similarly Hope is clad in green mantle, because (among other reasons) green is the color of young plants that are fresh and full of life, and vigor, and promise. Upon the greenness of spring-time we build our expectation of summer fruits and autumn harvests. Again, green is the color of the emerald, which was at one time thought to possess the virtue of preserving sight and of strengthening weak eyes, restoring memory, and repressing many inordinate movements and evil fantasms. There is no doubt that hope, which is rooted in faith, reacts in many helpful ways upon faith, tempering its light to the eyes of the soul, strengthening the mind's faculty to gaze upon mystery without ever doubting the truth thereof. These are some of the more apparent reasons why the Nymph of Hope is arrayed in green.

And Charity, the greatest of these three nymphs, why is she attired in flaming red? Perhaps because red is the color of blood, which feeds life, and, in its apostolic coursing through the veins, spends itself most unsparingly to nourish the body. Charity does this in the soul and in the moral body in which it exercises its power. Blood issues from the heart, which is the reputed organ and seat of love. Again, red is the ordinary hue of the rose, which is considered an emblem of love; perhaps, furthermore, because red is the color of fire, which means ardor, enthusiasm, earnestness, zeal. Surely, if we accept St. Paul's masterly description of what charity is and is not, we shall have no difficulty in admitting the propriety of dressing its representative in the color which stands for sincere devotedness, disinterested self-sacrifice, constant and enduring service in behalf of others, and an ever-clinging and all-consuming affection for that which is best.

The wonderful procession of the Church Triumphant, in which these three maidens figure, disappears, most of its personages journeying to higher realms. Dante, after relating the many haps and mishaps that occur to the chariot (the Church) and to the one who had taken his seat in it (the Pope), draws the curtain, and here the vision ends, leaving us under the impression that the conquering mission of the Church is to carry to the nations the messages of faith, of hope, and of love.

Dante will speak of these three virtues again. When he has been wafted high into the starry spheres, he will, at the suggestion of Beatrice, who personates sacred science or theology, discourse earnestly with the holy flames and splendors that people those luminous orbs. There he will speak more definitely, more profoundly, and even more poetically of these virtues. And there is no doubt that, to the lovers of poetry allied with theologic lore, his profound discussion and imaginative treatment of these subjects must be of absorbing interest.

Dante had once upon a time been summoned before the tribunal of the inquisition to have his faith probed, and he then and there answered his interrogators in a way so orthodox and in a style so poetical that the monks, who thought they had come to condemn, were compelled to approve, admire, and applaud. In his "Divine Comedy," he confesses his thoroughgoing Catholic belief before the ages. There, in that most impressive of dramatic settings, in the highest heaven, amid throngs of splendors, the voice of Beatrice is heard in supplication to these happy spirits in behalf of

Dante, that he may receive light and strength to confess what he believes, hopes for, and loves. One of these lights, more resplendent than others, comes forth. It is St. Peter, who will examine Dante on faith. ("Paradiso," Canto XXIV.) During the course of this long examination, Dante, in answer to St. Peter's questions, explains the nature of faith, its source, its reasonableness, its object, and finally professes what he believes and why he believes. In order to unfold the nature of faith, he takes up St. Paul's famous definition of that virtue, saying:

> "Faith of things hoped for is substance and the proof
> Of things not seen."

Thus the essence of faith consists in its being the foundation of all our hopes and an adhesion of our minds to the truths not demonstrated by reason. The cause of Dante's belief is revelation: "The flood rained down from the spirit of God upon the ancient bond and new. Here is the reason that convinceth me so feelingly; each argument beside seems blunt and forceless in comparison." When asked his reason for believing the Testaments inspired of God, he says that their inspiration is proved by the miracles that followed: "The works, that follow, evidence their truth;" and when further pressed for a reason for belief in the miracles, he declares:

> "That all the world . . . . should have been turned
> To Christian, and no miracle been wrought,
> Would in itself be such a miracle,
> The rest were not an hundredth part so great."

After being assured that grace, which held such sweet dal-

liance with his soul, had enabled him to answer so wisely to all these questions, Dante proceeds to answer the last, professing what he believes and upon what authority:

> "I in one God believe;
> One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love
> All heaven is moved, himself unmoved the while.
> Nor demonstration physical alone,
> Or more intelligential and abstruse,
> Persuades me to this faith; but from that truth
> It cometh to me, rather, which is shed
> Through Moses, the rapt prophets, and the Psalms,
> The Gospel, and what ye yourselves did write,
> When ye were gifted of the Holy Ghost.
> In three eternal Persons I believe;
> Essence threefold and one, mysterious league
> Of union absolute, which, many a time,
> The word of Gospel lore upon my mind
> Imprints: and from this germ, this firstling spark,
> The lively flame dilates; and, like heaven's star,
> Doth glitter in me."
> — ("Paradise," Canto XXIV.)

Upon this, pleased at the genuineness of Dante's faith, that coin so glittering and so sound, whose assay the poet had not feared, St. Peter thrice embraced him as his faithful disciple.

In countless passages throughout the poem, Dante teaches what inestimable benefits are showered upon us by this white Nymph of Faith. She is the fruitful mother of all the virtues; she it is that conducted Peter over the billows; she that peoples heaven's fair realms with citizens; she that makes the soul acceptable in the sight of God; she that saved the gentle Ripheus; she that vanquishes all error; she that is truer than all heretic declension, and she whose rewards, here and hereafter, surpass the richest gifts of the most

opulent queen. The apostles are praised for their proclamation of that belief, whose sound was so mighty on their lips; St. Dominic is eulogized for having so ably defended it, a hallowed wrestler, "gentle to his own, and to his enemies, terrible."

In the twenty-fifth canto of "Paradise," Dante makes plain to us who the green-decked nymph of "Purgatorio" is. Here hope, that theological virtue of which she is a symbol, is explained. The poet is interrogated on hope by St. James, who asks him what that virtue is, how and why he entertains it, and what is its object. Consistently with Dante's profession of faith, which is the groundwork of hope, Beatrice commends his hope, saying: "Among her sons, not one more full of hope hath the Church militant." Dante proceeds: "Hope is of joy to come, sure expectance, the effect of grace divine and merit preceding. This light from many a star [*i. e.*, from many parts of the Bible] visits my heart; but flowed to me the first from him who sang [David] the songs of the Supreme, himself supreme among his tuneful brethren. From thee [St. James], the next, distilling from his spring, in thine epistle, fell on me the drops so plenteously, that I on others shower the influence of their dew." As to the object of hope, Dante declares that it is the beatific vision, to be enjoyed by the soul reunited to the body glorified. "Both Scriptures, new and ancient, propose the mark (which even now I view) for souls beloved of God. Isaias saith that in their own land each one must be clad in twofold vesture and their proper land is this delicious life. In terms more full and clearer far, thy brother [St. John] hath set forth

this revelation to us, where he tells of the white raiment destined to the saints."

Midst the acclamations and joyous carols of the holy lights, Beatrice next introduces Dante to the Apostle St. John, who is to ask him to discourse on the last of the three theological virtues, the fire-clad Nymph of Charity. And the poet first proclaims that the one object which is the beginning and end of all his love, great and small, is the Good which makes the heavenly court content: in this one Good are all his wishes centered: in this palace is the fruit of all the lessons love can read him.

Urged further to say who directed his bow to such target, who taught him this, Dante answers that reason shows that good kindles love of itself, and, therefore, as God is Supreme Good, He is the chief object of love; that Aristotle, the master of those who know, teaches this, saying that the first love of all immortal substances is for their own first cause; and that God Himself has confirmed this truth in His revelations to inspired writers. There is in the following lines the whole philosophy of love:

> "Philosophy," said I, "hath arguments,
> And this place hath authority enough
> To imprint in me such love: for, of constraint,
> Good, inasmuch as we perceive the good,
> Kindles our love; and in degree the more,
> As it comprises more of goodness in't.
> The essence, then, whence such advantage is,
> That each good, found without it, is naught else
> But of his light the beam, must needs attract
> The soul of each one, loving, who the truth
> Discerns, on which this proof is built. Such truth
> Learn I from him who shows me the first love

Of all intelligential substances
Eternal; from his voice I learn, whose word
Is truth; that of himself to Moses saith:
'I will make all my good before thee pass:'
Lastly from thee I learn, who chief proclaim'st,
E'en at the outset of thy heralding,
In mortal ears the mystery of heaven."

St. John then presses the poet with a further question, asking him what other cords draw him toward God, and with how many teeth this love bites him; in different words, what other motives he has for loving God? Here is Dante's beautiful answer:

"All grappling bonds that knit the heart to God
Confederate to make fast our charity.
The being of the world; and mine own being;
The death which He endured, that I should live;
And that which all the faithful hope, as I do;
To the forementioned lively knowledge joined;
Have from the sea of ill love saved my bark,
And on the coast secured it of the right.
As for the leaves that in the garden bloom,
My love for them is great, as is the good
Dealt by the eternal hand, that tends them all."
— ("Paradise," Canto XXVI.)

All this may not be as simple as what Thomas à Kempis says on love, or as limpid as what St. Paul says on charity, but it is as true, and it lacks not that style of beauty which is akin to the sublime.

One cannot meet these three maidens and hear their comforting messages without being convinced of the faith, hope, and love of Dante himself, nor without conceiving a greater esteem for these three great virtues.

Not in any of the many meretricious sirens that are singing souls to perdition are we to put our trust; not in the raucous

siren of earth-bound philosophy, not in the screeching siren of empirical psychology, not in the strident siren of science, not in the tremulously lachrymose siren of humanitarianism, nor in the upward-gazing but cross-eyed siren of transcendentalism. The burden of their song is full of base deceit as well as of impenetrable mystery. Evolution, the most microscopical psychic analysis, the air-ship of idealism — all land us in the distressing eddies and shoals of doubt, and in the rayless darkness of man-made mysteries.

Would we sail into the light-illumed harbors of perfect knowledge, then must we have as our pilots reason and faith, the two guides of Dante's own genius. Would we avoid the shallows of pessimism and despair, then must we anchor our hopes to the stars of the Christian mariner. Would we teach ourselves and the world how man should love, and what he should love, then must we wed to our very souls the flame-clad nymph of Christly love — the greatest of these three, which is Charity.

CHAPTER IX.

DANTE'S PHILOSOPHY.

CONTENTS:—Wrong Views of Dante's Philosophy.—Unsafe Independence.—Dante and Hindoo Philosophy, Greek Philosophy, and Scholasticism.—Dante a Christian Ecclectic.—His Influence Upon Modern Philosophy.

At the time of Dante, anathemas, the thumbscrews of the Inquisition, burning at the stake, confiscation, banishment, and various other devices for the repression of thought, we are told, were in full operation. Scholars could then no more think independently than any citizen could dare love liberty, without exposing their very lives to the untender mercies of the powers that ruled the hour. A little before that time, Abelard, that brilliant, eloquent champion of reason, the most magnetic as well as the most pathetic figure of those tenebrous ages, had been compelled publicly to burn his books with his own hands, and had died too young, broken-hearted and broken-spirited, litterally crushed beneath the blows of invidious intolerance. Arnold of Brescia, another ardent lover of political and religious liberty, had come to the tragic end of all such unwise lovers, the Roman pyre. And was not Dante himself the victim of the tantalizings of intellectual pigmies that sat in high places? Was he not in a word the butt of the intellectual intolerance

and of the political tyranny of his age? And think you, this irrepressible thinker, this hungry genius, this proud exile will say nothing. Think you not rather that the clear and mighty scream of that eagle will drown the hateful buzzings of the intellectual wasps that fly around him, and send his warning messages a-ringing down the ages? Yes, he has spoken, and eloquently has he entered the protest of reason against the meddlesomeness of ecclesiasticism and the pernicious rulings of absolutism. Others have caught the cry, and, following his example, have finally succeeded in emancipating philosophy from theology, and in cutting science loose from the apron-strings of superannuated dogma. See how the glorious renaissance brushes away the dust and cobwebs from off the unused wheels of the motionless human brain; see what a healthy gust of enthusiasm for truth and beauty then dispels the poisonous miasma that exhaled from the stagnancy of inaction! Men begin to think. Luther arises. Locke, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Comte, Littré, Darwin, Kant, write philosophy that deserves the name. All hail, then, to Dante, the first of that long and glorious line of free and vigorous thinkers!

That is the way some modern materialists and rationalists would like to view Dante's philosophy. Confining ourselves for the present to Dante's purely intellectual philosophy, and leaving aside his again wrongly interpreted championship of political liberty, we say here that this materialistic and rationalistic view of Dante's philosophy is rash and indefensible. It is, on the part of philosophical heretics, an attempt, often tried by criminals, to conceal themselves and

their errors behind a great name; hence it is they invest Dante with the dubious honor of sponsorship for all the monstrous products of their most unmitigated empiricism and their most exclusive rationalism. What sinister glory they force upon Dante! He is hailed by them as the precursor of those splendid rebels in the realm of thought who have made their own minds the measure and the creator of all that is knowable, and whose names, they say, honor our humanity. And must he not also, we dare ask, be hailed as their master by all the mere noisy tin-pan philosophizers, by all those airy and superficial thinkers, by all those intellectual butterflies who too prefer their own petty gyrations to the eagle-flights of master geniuses, and who in their pitiable spitefulness dub as slaves those who would follow the soarings of regal minds as they explore the loftiest summits of knowable truth?

Oh, but our interpreters tell us they mean to make Dante the parent of that manly independence of reasoning, of that clear consciousness of the power and sufficiency the human intellect has to reach and grasp the whole truth. We knew all this. These fine words only cloak the rebellious spirit that swells the head with enormous and ridiculous pretensions while it embitters the heart and makes it a seat of fanatical hatred. Manly independence indeed! but, in the name of common sense, tell us, independence from whom or from what? From ecclesiasticism? But when did ever Pope or Bishop forbid scientist or philosopher to explore the rich, vast realms of nature and metaphysics and to demonstrate his hypotheses? When? Never. Not even in the case of Roger

Bacon or Galileo. It is only when thinkers, consciously or unconsciously, pass beyond their own proper sphere, or, when in order to prove their unproved theories, they weaken or destroy the Sacred Scriptures, in a word, when scientists and philosophers would enjoy the liberty of vandals, that the Church rises in her majesty of guardian of truth and points out to these rash thinkers the error of their ways.

But could we not grant you "manly independence" from faith? No, not "manly" independence, but the independence of the weakling, the timid, the pusillanimous. Faith is at the beginning and at the end of knowledge. It must enter as an element in the acquisition of the completest knowledge. He that would be independent of faith must be satisfied with very small scraps of information; but he can revel in his independence the while.

No more can we allow independence from tradition, from the teachings of the ages, from truths which are consecrated by the acceptance of the brightest intellects of all times and which, after thus traversing the centuries, bear upon their face clear evidence of tried solidity. Eiffel towers and such novelties do not call for the instant annihilation of the Pyramids and the substantial castles of Rhineland.

But is not the mind free in the ways it thinks? No. The mind is necessarily bound first by its own limitations, then by its own laws. It is bound by all the self-evident principles of metaphysics, the cast-iron axioms of every science, the invariable canons of every art. These be the guides to truth: reason, faith, tradition, the laws of mind. Independence from these means intellectual vagrancy and suicide. That

independence is a misnomer, an empty fraud. It can mean only the freedom to err. A precious boon indeed, this philosophical tramphood! a great advance for one who earnestly seeks the truth and is not merely intent upon performing clownish capers along the path of knowledge to distract those who are following the road!

And this self-sufficiency of the human mind, this consciousness of its innate power to attain all intelligible truth, is a windy boast, pure self-flattery. There is nothing in it except perhaps the danger of believing it, that is, the old alluring prospect of knowing everything, good and evil, and be like gods. No, the human mind is not self-sufficient; it is, as a matter of personal experience, constantly dependent upon the objects of its knowledge, which it does not create; it is, moreover, dependent upon the teaching and guidance of others from whom it receives a great deal more than it discovers by its own unaided exertions. And as regards truths of the spiritual and supernatural order, were it not for revelation, man's unaided reason, no matter how splendid its innate powers, would not reach the millionth part of what is now in its possession.

As to Dante's having been such an independent thinker, that cannot be admitted. Truly he has dignified reason by using it himself so well; yet does he allot to faith the large share it has in the makings of our knowledge; religiously does he respect the traditions and copiously does he draw from the rich stores of learning accumulated by the intellectual bees of the ages; strictly and rigorously does he adhere to the great laws that guide the operations of reason. This

will be easily apparent if we but look at his works, especially at his autobiography, the "Divine Comedy." These speak in no uncertain tones for themselves and their author. Only the wilfully blind can fail to see.

Again we can form an idea of the sterling character, the legitimacy of Dante's philosophy by considering the sources from which he derived his varied learning. He did not disdain what there was of valuable suggestiveness and winged inspiration in Indian philosophy. The plan of his "Purgatory" and the investing of departed souls with aerial bodies show not only that Dante was acquainted with the philosophy of India, but how much he borrowed from it. Yet at the same time he peremptorily rejects the pantheism of which this system is redolent; he refutes the duality of souls as taught by Averroes. Here he sided with the scholastics. Poor mental slave! The general plan of the "Divine Comedy," showing vice in itself, virtue in conflict with vice, and virtue triumphant, was, it is claimed, likewise imitated from Brahminical books.

As to the true, but coarse and obscure, teachings of early philosophers, he receives these as clarified after they had passed through the filter of Aristotle's well-adjusted mind. Aristotle's own doctrines came to Dante with the dews of their Christian baptism still glistening upon them. He drew what was best, and that alone, from Greek philosophy as christened by the scholastics. He is a spiritualist, a mystic, an idealist, like Plato; a realist, an exact reasoner, like Aristotle.

In Dante there are easily traceable Plato's love of the

metaphysical, his fondness for the invisible and the unearthly, his yearning for absolute beauty, perfection, and goodness, his inexpressible longing to contemplate the divine exemplars of which visible things are but pale, faded copies. Dante accepts Socrates' and Plato's idea of God,— a being intelligent and good, incorporeal, the first equation, absolute in beauty, immutable, master of the universe, distinct from it and independent of it. Though Dante did not admit eternal matter, nor God as simply the designer and disposer of the material universe, yet, with Plato he ascribed evil to the stubbornness or insufficiency of matter.

There was also much in Plato's Theory of Supreme Reason and Ideas which appealed to the poetical mind of Dante and which we see reproduced in his "Purgatory" and "Paradise." Dante's theories on love and beauty bear a striking resemblance to the teachings of Plato on the same subjects; and his own "mystic tenderness" for Beatrice has been rightly characterized as Platonic love. Thus, on and on, Dante follows Plato in his further and still higher contemplations of the great virtues and the Supreme Good, until, as Ozanam says, "the swan of the Academy and the eagle of Florence, hovering together in these transcendental heights, are lost to view in a like glorious radiance."

But though Dante thought well of Plato, he thought better of Aristotle, whose philosophic supremacy he proclaims, when he styles him "the master of those who know." He borrows and forces into his rhythmic lines Aristotle's technical terms, his symmetrical classifications, his perfect exactitude, his scientific definitions of cause and effect, his

distinctions between substance and accident, the necessary and the contingent, power and act, matter and form, his teachings on genus, species, and the individual. Though Dante does not like the astronomy and physiology of Aristotle, he nevertheless adopts his theory of motion and follows him on all strictly philosophical questions about man, the body, the soul, its faculties, the complex processes of sensation and thought, the active and the passive intellect. But he corrects or completes Aristotle and, as a Christian philosopher, holds the soul's indubitable immortality. He is quite partial to Aristotle's ethics and finds inspiration in his treatment of love, friendship, pleasure, action, liberty, and especially his defining happiness as consisting in the virtuous activity of contemplative life. Again, he adopts Aristotle's view of God as primal mover, pure form, infinite act.

Dante saw in Plato a mind which proceeded in its investigations by way of synthesis, and in Aristotle a mind which sought the true by way of analysis. Both viewed the same truths, but each from a different position. Dante avails himself of the results of both processes. Aristotle is supreme; Plato is next to him. Unstinted as is the praise Dante lavishes upon these two great pagans, yet is there never on his part any surrender of Christian principle. This ignoble surrender was made by the scholars of the renaissance. Dante had such strong Christian individuality that he could stand the influence of these two giant pagan thinkers without being overcome by it. Had he lacked intellectual stamina and strong Christian conviction; had he, too, imbibed what is erroneous in their systems; had he picked up the pleasure

worship of Epicurus, the skepticism of Pyrrho, and the materialism of Democritus, he would have been little else than a mere philosophical dust-pan in which it were folly to expect to find the jewels of thought that so profusely begem his works.

As there is in all Dante's work plain evidence of the influence of Plato's idealism and enthusiasm and of Aristotle's sensism and scientific accuracy, so there are also clear traces of the mysticism of St. Bonaventure and the dogmatism of St. Thomas, the two great representatives of the purest and wisest teachings of scholasticism. St. Bonaventure'e defense of Plato led Dante to love all the more the Christian mystic and to embrace his views upon the soul's mysterious union with God as the beginning and the end of human action; it led him to incorporate into his poem St. Bonaventure's ascetic teachings, or the ways of sanctification, his ascent up the ladder of the virtues to the very throne of divine loveliness and goodness. Dante's poetical sympathies caused him to imitate the suggestive symbolism of St. Bonaventure and Plato, their metaphoric and allegorical style which dignifies nature by personifying metaphysical abstractions, good, evil, the virtues, the vices, grace, and other invisible and spiritual beings.

No less marked influence did St. Thomas exert over Dante. The Angelic Doctor had great veneration for Aristotle, whom he simply quotes as "The Philosopher." It was through him chiefly that Aristotle's supremacy was acknowledged in the Christian schools. In the teachings of Aquinas are found as main traits the same universality of knowledge, the same

profundity of views, the same sobriety of language, the same classifications of the sciences and of the objects of science. Through St. Thomas, Dante receives what was lacking in Aristotle's sensism; he adopts even the order in which St. Thomas had classified the objects of science, viz.: being, God, spirits, man. In almost the words of the Angelic Doctor he discourses upon the transcendental attributes of being, the nature and root of evil. With him he enters into the divine essence and spells out its wonderful attributes, avoiding alike anthropomorphism and polytheism, and finally unfolds the mysteries of the Trinity. With St. Thomas, Dante raises us to a contemplation of spiritual beings and passes in review the various orders of angels. Again with St. Thomas, following in the footsteps of Aristotle, Dante enters upon the study of man, the substantial union of soul and body, the wonderfully complex powers of the one same soul, especially its faculties of intellection and of free volition, the last end of man, his liberty, law, the passions, virtue, vice, authority, society, immortality, and resurrection.

Now, here it may be asked, how Dante and his Christian teachers succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between the two great representatives of pagan thought, Plato, the idealist, and Aristotle, the realist? This they did chiefly by the position which they took upon the question of universals. Dante was in this matter both a prudent realist and a broad-minded conceptualist. But the mediæval philosophers did more than this. They rendered to ancient philosophy a still better service by endowing the conjectural knowledge of the ancients with sureness, force, and solidity. They made the

clear light of Christian revelation shine upon the grave questions of philosophy and dispelled therefrom the lingering shadows of doubt and uncertainty. Philosophy thus Christianized drew together and held alike the mystics and the dogmatists, the lovers of Plato and the disciples of Aristotle, Augustine and Bonaventure, Scotus and Thomas. As a result, then, of all the intellectual activities of his age, working upon and through his own comprehensive mind with its quick power of apprehending differences and of fusing them, Dante can be definitely and rightly characterized in philosophy as a Christian eclectic.

Dante's genius was one of methods and hence was well adapted to give new and vigorous impulse and a practical direction to philosophy and to other sciences in their common aim to reach truth. Dante may have influenced such men as Bacon, Descartes, and Leibnitz. By questioning the infallibility of the syllogism, by submitting to an examination the majors and minors of the schools he did much towards drawing the attention from words to things. Dialectics became less important. The observation of facts, prudence in reasoning, deep and constant meditation, and the allotting of its peculiar certitude to each subject — these, as says a profound student of Dante, were the rules which this poet insisted upon as the guides of the philosopher.

By stripping philosophic truth of much of the mere wordiness, the learned pedantry, the stiff garb of the class-room, and by investing it in the glory of poetic expression in the "Divine Comedy," and by giving forth its great lessons in the sweet and simple language of the "Banquet," Dante con-

tributed as much as one man could to popularize philosophy. He showed that philosophy could be introduced into poetry and be used in every-day life and still be philosophy. By practically demonstrating that the same truth can be expressed in different words he showed that when thought is strong and clear, when the conception of a truth is vivid and forceful it will compel the words to fit themselves to express the thought. Thus truth and thought were victoriously proved to be independent of words.

Now, in view of the not unfounded claim made by many that there are in Dante's works numerous suggestions that led to the discoveries of Newton, Columbus, Cuvier, and Buffon, and knowing what we do know of the methods which he practiced in dealing with philosophical questions, we must allow that he was a cause of the progress of the experimental sciences which flourished at a later period. But in all this he remained entirely free from any taint of materialism and mere earth-bound empiricism. Dante was too superior a genius to exhaust or to immerse himself totally in matter. Matter was for him but a stepping-stone up to that point of vantage from whence he could look beyond all visible horizons.

Dante returns from his visions of the invisible worlds of immortality with a whole moral philosophy of human life, a practical wisdom that must teach men how to live and how to die like heirs to starry realms. He is ever wisely considerate of the practical difficulties that beset man in the attainment of these high ends, and speaks in warning tones, for instance, of political wranglings, of strifes for power, for privilege, for honor, for wealth.

Dante's own political theories, while grandly democratic, are more curious than usable; and some of his severe political maxims, formulated perhaps, as is believed, in his moods of crushing sadness and bitter resentment, are more dangerous than true. But of this, more anon.

The "Divine Comedy" is a picture gallery in which the philosophy of history is taught by object lessons. It culminates in the final deification of human nature as beheld in Dante's vision of Christ in the Godhead. Dante dignified humanity; but not as modern rationalists do, that is, by endeavoring to show that it is self-sufficient; no, but by showing its many-sided kinship with divinity and by pointing out its higher than earthly destiny. Such sane rationalists as Bossuet and F. Schlegel have delighted in pursuing the same train of thought and study, proclaiming those solemn truths of life, death, and eternity which cannot but force morality into history and lead human kind to duty.

Thus do we see how Dante is associated with all that is highest and most inspiring, as well as most practical in modern philosophy. And these very analogies which Dante's philosophy bears to the best thought of pagan times and the best philosophy of Christian times, to that of his own age and to the true which later periods have developed — all these analogies serve to establish the legitimacy, the sterling character of Dante's philosophy. This cursory survey of the vast field of thought which Dante has covered enables us to conclude that in all serious matters of philosophy he is remarkably sound.

CHAPTER X.

WAS DANTE A CATHOLIC?

CONTENTS: — DANTE CHARGED WITH ERRONEOUS POLITICAL TEACHINGS; ACCUSED OF SEMI-PAGANISM; SAID TO HAVE BEEN THE PRECURSOR OF LUTHER.— REFUTATION OF THESE CHARGES.— CATHOLICITY OF DANTE VINDICATED.

Some time ago, while our clarinets and violins were tuning up for a rehearsal of St. Patrick's opera, a group of students commenced discussing points of the last lecture of the Dante course. Said one of them:

"Father, in your last address you hinted at the political philosophy of Dante. Are you going to develop that subject, may I ask, before you take up the defense of Dante's orthodoxy along other lines? It appears that the great Florentine disagrees with the noted philosophers of his time on the temporal power of the Popes. He was clearly against it."

"There is no doubt on that particular point," I replied. "It can be easily shown from several passages in the 'Divine Comedy' that Dante thought temporal power not only undesirable for the Popes but a hindrance in the way of their apostolic work."

"But Father, is there not some truth in the opinion of certain interpreters of the 'Divine Comedy,' like Rossetti and,

I think, Foscolo, who say that the political opinion of Dante on Papal sovereignty is the very central point of the entire teaching of that poem? Everything in the poem, they say, hinges upon that and tends to prove the thesis that temporal dominion is the bane of the Papacy and of the world. Nay more, Rossetti sees in Dante's Beatrice, not the embodiment of divine wisdom, but the spirit of imperial monarchy; God is the Supreme Emperor; the Ghibelline party is the party of love, of life, of light, of salvation; the Guelph party is naught but darkness, hate and perdition; Rome is hell and the Pope is Satan. This, he says, is the clear allegorical meaning of the 'Divine Comedy.' Thus would Dante have concealed beneath the mysterious language common then to the poetry of chivalry political doctrines which were to quite revolutionize the world."

"Well," said I, "I am happy to note the interest which you take in those subjects, and I shall certainly try to satisfy your desire to know what to think of that interpretation of the 'Divine Comedy.'"

"There is a good deal of mythology in the 'Divine Comedy,'" remarked another student, "and I think it is that same Foscolo who claims that Dante's heaven-appointed mission and set purpose were to reconcile Christianity with paganism and to restore to a place of honor the old mythology and the doctrines of ancient philosophy. This purpose, however, it is said, Dante artfully concealed beneath the allegories of the 'Divine Comedy,' because he feared religious persecution and political violence. What are we to think of that charge of semi-paganism made against Dante?"

"That," said a third, "is not so bad as the interpretation of Francowitz, Du Plessis-Mornay, Landino and others, who by the aid of Dante's alleged cipher have discovered that he was the prophet of the Reformation, announcing by that cipher (1517) the very year in which Luther was to begin to preach his heretical doctrines. They hail Dante as the precursor of Protestantism; for he too dubbed the Papacy the bad woman of the Apocalypse, and it is precisely in this detestation of the Papacy, which Dante has in common with Protestants, that consists the essence of Protestantism. As for me, that is the position which I should like to have thoroughly cleared."

As I had noticed the eagerness of each of the students to put his query before the rehearsal began, I had listened attentively to their several difficulties, and I had just thanked them for supplying me abundant materials for an interesting lecture when the leader's baton directed the first measure of the opening chorus.

About a week after this, at the regular meeting of the Dante class, the following explanations were given:

The political philosophy of Dante is the least satisfactory part of the entire system of philosophy which he develops in his works. In politics he wanders away from St. Thomas, whom he follows in everything else. The dreamer asserts himself here, so too the sensitive exile. He is consequently inexact and unsafe. The great point of divergence here between Dante and the mediæval philosophers is not, however, so much the question of Papal sovereignty as the question of the relations between Church and State. St. Thomas and

the scholastics held that there is an essential relation between these two and that Church is superior to State as soul is to body. Dante makes them reciprocally and entirely independent in their respective spheres, declares the Pope the temporal vassal of the Roman emperor, and teaches that the emperor owes but filial reverence to the Pope.

The treatise "De Monarchia," in which these teachings are found, was placed on the Index as tending to the absolutism of secular power. Here Dante *ex professo* sets forth principles which are at variance with the social ethics of the Christian schools, principles which make rulers independent of the spiritual power and fully relieve them of accountability in any matter whatever to the head of Christendom, principles which therefore are certain to develop the dangerous and ridiculous pretensions of civil power, and which reduce pontifical authority, as regards rulers, to a very small measure. Hence this work was condemned by the Church, which is the guardian of truth.

The "Divine Comedy" was never thus censured. Popes at different times accepted dedications of careful editions of the great poem and have regarded it as a masterpiece of literary art. The severe judgments which Dante here gives forth upon the political acts of certain popes are ascribed to anger at the disappointment of his political hopes and to the crushing sorrows of exile.

The shadows of Dante's ideal fabric of universal empire are not clearly traceable in the "Divine Comedy." In our poet's dream of universal royalty Charles VII of Germany appeared the man of destiny. Dante was exceedingly sensitive to any

act of public policy which would tend to retard the aggrandizement of the power of Charles and the realization of the poet-philosopher's own theories. Popes who, for reasons that seemed just to them, rather sought the independence of Italy and lent aid to increase the prestige of France, were undermining the great Power Trust of Dante's Holy Roman Empire and hence became the butt of his vengeful shafts, as is apparent especially in the concluding cantos of "Purgatorio." The popes thought themselves justified in overlooking this exhibition of feeling on the part of overwrought genius. There was here, they thought — and they were qualified to judge — no deep-laid heresy against cardinal points of Christian philosophy, but only an occasional outpouring of resentment against certain popes.

Furthermore, the temporal sovereignty of the Pope is not regarded as a question of such vital importance as is that of the essential relation between Church and State. Temporal rule is something accidental to pontifical authority. Dante's opposition to the temporal power of the Pope is evident and strongly expressed in the "Divine Comedy." But this is a question, a large and still an open question, on both sides of which a great deal is being said. Dante was as certainly entitled to hold and to express an opinion on the subject as clergymen and laymen are to-day. The reasons which he assigns for this opinion are not slight.

But while we admit that Dante incidentally gives vent to his distaste for the holding of temporal power and large possessions by Popes and other ecclesiastics, we must repudiate Rossetti's theory that the emancipation of the world from all

Papal sovereignty forms the basis and the whole edifice of the "Divine Comedy." We must, with W. Schlegel, himself a Protestant and the oracle of literary criticism in his day, reject this interpretation. And why? Because it would make Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio the most astute of conspirators, men who invented a literature of enigmas beneath which were concealed most insidious attacks upon the sacredest institutions of human society.

Now, as regards Dante personally and also in view of the high and true sense of his poem, Rossetti's interpretation is untenable, nay, it is an outrageous calumny. Why? Because such a course of secret assault, if Dante had followed it, would brand him with hypocrisy, with fear, with cowardice, with the concealed malice of the revolutionist — and nothing is more alien to the character of Dante than all this. Dante was personally a brave man, a fearless soldier who fought at Campaldino, and who in the midst of political turmoils a hundred times exposed his life. Is it likely such a man could fear persecution? And could that man be a hypocrite who never flattered the great; who, as Ozanam says, knew not how to conceal his thoughts; who dealt so harshly with emperors, popes, kings and republics; who applied so vigorously the scourge of his genius to the vices of his contemporaries; who casts into hell his enemies and his friends alike? Is it possible that a man with a mind so luminous and a heart so passionately fond of justice and truth could or would stoop to conventional tricks and wretched artifices of language, to a poetry of prize puzzles devised to conceal truth? Dante would then himself become the most insoluble of enigmas.

Likewise is it impossible to fasten upon the man Dante the charge of conspiracy. There is none of the baseness of the secret conspirator in his make-up. If he writes to kings and emperors, it is an open and a public letter, like his ringing appeal to Charles in behalf of Italy and the Holy Roman Empire. Down, away down in the frozen bottom of Cocytus, in the hell of traitors, is Brutus, the political conspirator and assassin. Thither Dante sends all those who carry about them daggers for slaying kings. If revolutionists think to find in Dante an accomplice, they are sure to find him too outspoken, too frank. He will not do. Besides, none has held the principle of authority more intact and sacred than Dante. While he tries to show that temporal dominion is harmful to the Popes he exalts their spiritual authority as much as he magnifies the temporal power of the emperors. He has a deep-rooted reverence for what he acknowledges the God-given right to rule, whether in spiritual or in temporal matters. We can see then how little the interpretation of Rossetti squares with the personal traits of Dante.

This interpretation is likewise quite foreign to the spirit and meaning of the "Divine Comedy," which is far from being merely a manual of political tenets skillfully interspersed with blood-curdling ghost stories. The "Divine Comedy" is not a catechism of politics. The political elements found there are only accessories; they are introduced to lend vividness and a certain actuality to the narration of things which so far transcend mortal experience. And in this Dante shows himself the perfect artist. Now a Guelph, now a Ghibelline, he soon loses sight of the bitter wranglings

of the political arena and soars infinitely higher into the serener altitudes of metaphysical and moral truth. There, upon those lofty peaks, eagle-like, Dante loves to dwell, to contemplate in the cloudless azure of his own heaven the radiant sun of Perfect Being, and those lesser fires, the spirits and man, that shine around Him. If the poet, too, like the eagle, descends into the plain below and there seeks prey, it is only to remind us that he is human.

To view the "Divine Comedy" not as the tribute paid by genius to love and science as personified by Beatrice, but only as the expression of political dissatisfaction and spite, is to belittle both Dante and his masterwork, to rob him of his great glory as a poet, as a philosopher, and as an ideal lover of the ideally lovable. This would make Beatrice an undecipherable cipher and would rob the entire "Divine Comedy" of all its tender elegiac elements. We must therefore discard this first interpretation as unjust to the character and genius of Dante and as entirely irreconcilable with the sense of his grand poem. It is for very much these same reasons that Schlegel and Ozanam long ago rejected the interpretation of Rossetti.

As to Foscolo's view of the "Divine Comedy," in which Dante would pose as the reconciler of Christianity with paganism, we might summarily reject this as unworthy of serious notice. However, let me urge briefly some of the considerations which prevent us from accepting it. In introducing mythology into his poem Dante makes no profession of paganism; he simply avails himself of a liberty generally granted to poets and other artists. In works of fiction we

must expect to find the fanciful blended with the real. Dante found these mythological notions floating in the popular mind, and among them he discovered ready-made types of vices and of certain natural virtues, which he artfully uses as mere elements that make for pleasing variety. Dante's acknowledgement of and admiration for the splendid natural endowments of pagan scholars like Virgil, Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Cato, and others, is the noble tribute of high-born genius to other genius. There was much truth, goodness, and beauty in the teachings and in the lives of these men; Dante admires them for this. But ever and far above them does he place Christian sages and saints whose lives and works were aflame and aglow with that supernatural element which endows nature with the power of noblest life and heaven-crowned achievements. The bands of pagan scholars and just men he leaves in limbo; the Christian scholars and saints, with the Light of the World shining full upon them, avoiding the errors of pagan philosophy, make its truth a stepping-stone to a view of higher things and mount with Dante to the starry spheres. One fails to see how in all this there is anything like an approach to compromise and marriage between paganism and Christianity.

There remains the third interpretation, which would make Dante a very poor Catholic, one whose orthodoxy was so shaky, whose allegiance to the Papacy was so doubtful, that Protestants can claim him as their glorious predecessor. It is true that once Dante was summoned to appear before the Inquisitor, who somehow or other has become the veritable bogyman of the Protestant mind. That happened this way:

Certain Franciscan friars, being offended because Dante had represented their order as not sending any more representatives to heaven, took him to task for it and demanded that he appear before the tribunal of the Inquisition to give satisfactory evidence of the completeness and genuineness of his faith. Dante asked and was granted the night, during which he drew up in most charming verse a profession of his Catholic belief. This he submitted to the twelve grave judges, who were astonished and delighted at the beauty of the expression and the unexceptionable orthodoxy of the doctrine which the poet professed. That the Inquisitor dismissed Dante with warm congratulations and laughed at the rather suspicious friars is evidence that the Inquisition was not, as it is often represented, the extinguisher of science nor the hinderer of genius.

But Dante did not profess his Catholic faith only before the tribunal of his day; he professes it before the ages and in no uncertain words throughout his immortal poem and especially in Canto XXIV of "Paradiso," where St. Peter, sitting as judge, questions him about the faith, and, after hearing his answers, embraces him, crowns and blesses him. In Dante there was not the pride of intellect which refuses to believe mystery. His mind was large enough to take in truths of the natural and of the supernatural order. With him, as with the most scholarly Catholic divines, St. Augustine and St. Thomas, philosophy's mission is to aid faith to accept inexplicable mystery. He is distinctively Catholic in that he considers the Scriptures and tradition as the rule of faith, and gives the Church the dignified title of Spouse

of Christ. He personifies her theology in the lovely figure of Beatrice. He is inexorable in his condemnation of schismatics even when the individuals belong to his preferred political party, as Frederick II and Cardinal Ubaldini. Moreover, how is it possible to consider Dante as the precursor of Luther and the reformers when he teaches all the doctrines controverted or discarded by them? Dante is uncompromising on indulgences, on works of satisfaction, on the jubilee, on the efficacy of prayers for the dead, on the spiritual jurisdiction of the Popes, on penance, on the intercession of the saints, on the special honor to be paid to the Blessed Virgin. If our separated brethren admitted all these with us and Dante, we could all shake hands.

Ah! but the Papacy? There's the rub! A word of explanation is due here. Dante praised some of the fourteen Popes who were his contemporaries; he said nothing of many of them; but he severely scored others, and this he did through his intense love of the Papacy. Dante professes the highest regard for and pays the highest tribute of veneration to the Papacy, which he considers as the holiest of institutions. What indeed could be more sacred in his eyes than the earthly office to which belongs that tremendous power over souls, the power to loose and to bind, that complete spiritual jurisdiction, the right to legislate, to grant indulgences, to canonize, and to excommunicate? Dante thus viewed the Papacy.

However, he distinguishes the Papacy from the Popes. He loves and reveres the Papacy and most of the Popes; and while he hates certain Popes he never ceases to respect and honor their office. That he hated some of the Popes on

account of their vices, of their simony or nepotism, or of their political intriguing — supposing the Popes guilty of these charges — this would only prove that he loved the Papacy all the more and would not suffer such a holy and dignified office to be thus lowered and disgraced. Indignation, especially when it is conscious of being righteous, is no sin. It is not heresy for you or me to believe the Pope capable of various crimes. The Pope, though infallible, is not impeccable. Dante thought he had sufficient evidence to convict certain Popes of certain sins and hence he sends them to hell. He is not therefore a heretic, but he is as thorough a hater of these Popes as he is a faithful lover of the Papacy. Recall the pious tribute which Dante pays to the Papacy even in the person of his sworn enemy Boniface VIII when a captive at Anagni: "In His Vicar, Christ Himself is led a captive and His mockery acted over again. Lo! to His holy lip the vinegar and gall are once more applied; and He is doomed to bleed betwixt living robbers."—"Purgatorio," XX, 86. Again, when Dante upbraids Nicholas III for his nepotism and simony, he says that reverence for the keys alone restrains him from severer speech.—"Inferno," XIX, 104. When he meets Adrian V in purgatory, cleansing himself from his youthful sins of avarice, he would, upon recognizing him, do him reverence, because of inward awe at his high dignity, and the humble spirit bids him rise from his knees.—"Purgatorio," XIX, 126.

We have said, and it is well to recall, that Popes have declared the "Divine Comedy" a classic of matchless power and beauty which only untaught souls can fail to appreciate.

They have looked upon Dante's censures of some of their predecessors as either spontaneous outbursts of personal feeling or expressions of contemporary opinions whose power of injury the cool judgment of history reduces to naught.

Dante then, if we take him as he has written himself in his "Divine Comedy," stands out from among its many splendors of philosophic and theological doctrine as a grand exponent of Catholic verity. He has in his poem laid his name upon that which is universal in time and place — the unchangeable Catholic truth. Though centuries roll on and dynasties change, his deathless poem remains the song of the ages and of the nations, sounding still and sounding ever the lessons of highest life to the very end of all times and to all the generations of men. Thus truly and thus grandly Catholic is the poét Dante.

But what about the famous cipher? Does not this stand out boldly against Dante's Catholicity? It will be easily admitted that the alleged cipher even at its best would cut a poor figure against Dante's orthodoxy at this stage of the matter. Moreover, the cipher needs too much padding in order to meet the exigencies of the case. The numbers 500, 5, and 10, which occur in "Purgatorio," XXX, 14, must have 1002 arbitrarily added to them to give the exact date, 1517, which Francowitz is after. Now these numbers, 500, 5, and 10, when put in Roman letters, merely spell the word Dux (v then standing for u), and signify the heaven-sent leader who, in Dante's mind, was likely some Ghibelline prince who would succeed in overcoming the influence of Philip the Fair, of whom precisely there is question in this very passage.

Cardinal Bellarmine has written a masterly refutation of the claims founded upon the cipher.

These several interpretations and senses of the "Divine Comedy" are then to be rejected for the various reasons already assigned, and for the additional reason that they run counter to a well-established principle of interpretation which may be thus stated: "The allegorical sense of one expression or passage should not render inexplicable any or all other passages, but should harmonize with and tend to unfold the allegorical sense of the whole poem." This principle is certainly not kept in mind by the interpreters whose opinions we have discussed. Therefore we are entitled to conclude that their interpretations are far from infallibly true. Moreover, these interpretations rob Dante himself of all his glory, the glory of a great and noble conception so splendidly executed. This grand conception suffers violence at the hands of those who trim it to fit their small views of the world and its institutions. These interpretations, lastly, would rob the Church of the glory which she rightly claims of having nurtured and inspired such a genius, of having brought forth a son capable of so sweetly and so strongly singing the exalted beauty and sanctity of her doctrines. As Catholic students, jealous of our family glories — of which Dante is by no means the least — to all those who would rob us of him in the broad daylight of his radiant Catholicity, we say emphatically and peremptorily: "Hands off!"

CHAPTER XI.

DANTE'S MESSAGE ON GREED.

CONTENTS: — WEALTH NOT NECESSARILY EVIL.— GREED OUR NATIONAL VICE.—GREAT MORAL PHILOSOPHERS CONDEMN AVARICE.— CHRISTIAN TEACHING ON MATERIAL GOODS.— EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNISM.— EVANGELICAL POVERTY IN MIDDLE AGES.— DANTE'S GRAPHIC TREATMENT OF THE NATURE OF GREED; ITS CAUSES; ITS EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUAL, ON CITY, STATE AND CHURCH; ITS VARIOUS PUNISHMENTS IN "INFERNO" AND "PURGATORIO."

There are certain lessons which it is needful to proclaim often, from the highest pulpit, with the most authoritative tone and in strong and ringing accents; there are solemn warnings which humanity must hear frequently from the majestic voices of its great leaders, and there are examples which cannot be too permanently held up to the wondering eyes of men and of nations. And why should these lessons be repeatedly given, why these warnings be frequently thundered forth, why these models often brought before our view? Because of the false but potently alluring charms of vices which are demons clad in the vesture of angels; because of man's proneness to insensibly lose sight and hold of the higher goods and to sink ever lower in his pursuit of material advantages; because, again, while words often but strike the vacant air and, as they fly, fail to move the heart, examples

have a more directly appealing power and always more effectually withdraw men from evil and move them to achieve such glorious deeds as others have done.

Now, of all the many downward tendencies which humanity is heir to, it can scarcely be denied that the inordinate desire for wealth is one of the most common as well as the most dangerous. One need not assume that wealth is in itself evil. It is not. The patriarchs and many of the kings of God's chosen people, Joseph of Arimathea and many others, whom we are rightly taught to consider as men of holiness, were also men of large means. Without doubt they had acquired affluence in just and lawful ways, and they also in a creditable way acquitted themselves of all the duties and responsibilities which the possession of immense wealth entails. It is not, then, the fact of being rich that is censurable and calls for the whip of human genius and the scourge of divine chastisement; no, it is the way in which one becomes rich, the means which he uses to make wealth flow into his coffers, that are very often unfair and therefore damnable. A large number of men need watching in this regard. Wealth also becomes a curse even in the hands of its lawful possessor, when it is too fondly cherished or put to perverse uses by him.

Do we not hear it said by the gravest authorities in our land, by our most zealous and enlightened statesmen and churchmen, that the curse and shame of our country at present is the insane worship of the almighty dollar? the unswerving application of all our best energies, through the most unscrupulous methods, to the rapid and large accumulation of wealth? The moral plague of our times and country, they say, is not intemperance, is not incontinency, is not religious

indifference. That plague is the consuming rage to get rich and to get rich quickly, by fair means or foul; it is in one word: greed. The one thing we Americans as a people are mortally afraid and ashamed of is poverty. Though greed has not been an uncommon vice among individuals at all times, yet now and here, for perhaps the first time in history, we find greed stamped upon a people as its national vice.

All the world's great moral teachers, the sages and poets, have inveighed against this vice, and taught men to moderate their desires and to practice honesty; and the lessons of those teachers have not been wholly unheeded. Pythagoras and Socrates had taught by word and example that detachment from earthly goods is necessary for the attainment of the highest excellence. Crates gave away all his goods; Diogenes lived in a tub; Virgil, that high-born spirit, bewails the dreadful effects of "the accursed thirst for gold," and Horace in one of his satires throws merited ridicule upon the avaricious man of his day. Moreover, mankind has heard voices infinitely greater than those; it has heard the heralds of God, the prophets who delivered heaven's messages to earth. Above all, it has heard, too, the One in whom resides the plentitude of divine wisdom and sanctity; it has seen Him live and die in poverty, though even in His infancy He was adored by kings; it has seen Him casting out of the temple the money-changers; it has heard Him call those particularly blessed who do not fasten their affections upon worldly goods, but who are poor in spirit; it has heard Him exhort all to seek first the things of heaven, the goods of the soul, and promise that all else would be provided for them; it has heard Him declare that He had not a stone whereon to lay His head,

and that He had to miraculously borrow from a fish the coin wherewith to pay His tribute to Cæsar; and finally, it has seen Him die a painful death between two thieves! Why, if not to signify, among other things, that the most universal cause of men's misdeeds is their ungoverned cupidity?

As Christ, unlike the philosophers, spoke as one having authority, His word was more perfectly and more generally obeyed. The early Christians throw into one common fund all their belongings and live a community life. Later on, bands of men and women, young and old, flee from the haunts of society and people the deserts. How vital had been that word of Christ! How potent and how efficacious! Later on, again, when the old love of the things of this world seemed to over-assert itself, there rose one who, voluntarily stripping himself of all his paternal property, chose poverty as his spouse. This great example of Francis shone far and near; the fire of enthusiasm spread everywhere, and all classes by hundreds entered into the holy bonds of evangelical poverty. Great orders of mendicant friars were established, and every monastery was a kingdom in which poverty was the rule, an eloquent pulpit preaching the excellence of that condition, and exhorting all by word and example to detach their hearts from earthly goods and to be poor in spirit, if not in fact.

Now, Dante, the bard of all the glories of Christianity, as deep in philosophy as he was earnest in Catholicity, as capable of censuring evil as he was able to applaud the right, appeared upon the scene some short time after the foundation of these mendicant orders. Deeply versed in all the inspiring teachings of the gospels and in all the philosophies, having in his own life tasted the sweets of high station and exper-

ienced the discomforts of the most abject condition, he was qualified to speak on this as well as upon a variety of other subjects. His "mystic, unfathomable song" repeats the accents of the great inspired teachers of humanity. Hence its tone of solemn and impressive authority, which commands respectful assent; hence we find in his voice a majesty that awes. When he speaks of vice he is terrible; he unveils the repulsive deformity of sin in such a way as to make us turn from it in loathing and disgust. When he speaks of virtue he fires us with a desire to embrace its loveliness. To know, then, what this eloquent teacher has said about greed, its nature, its effects on the individual, on society, on the state and the Church, and to know likewise how he has spoken of poverty, cannot but be most useful to us from literary as well as from moral and social viewpoints. The literary excellence of what Dante will tell us will be evident from the very wording of the burning thoughts we shall have occasion to cite.

Among the chief obstacles that bar the path of a man who seeks the ways of virtue, Dante describes three: ambition, lust, and avarice. These he paints, respectively, under the symbols of the lion, the panther, and the she-wolf, which all surround him in that dark forest wherein Virgil finds him at the beginning of his pilgrimage. Of these three vices the one most to be dreaded is avarice. It is this which works the most fatal ravages in the Christian flock. It is this which will render necessary the fiery preaching of Dominic and his friars. Such is the warning which Dante gives to his age, and indeed to ours, in the following lines, in which Virgil explains to the affrighted pilgrim the dangerous character of the she-wolf which hindered his passage:

"Thou must needs
Another way pursue, if thou wouldst 'scape
From out that savage wilderness. This beast,
At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none
To pass, and no less hind'rance makes than death:
So bad and so accursed in her kind,
That never sated is her ravenous will,
Still after food more craving than before.
To many an animal in wedlock vile
She fastens, and shall yet to many more,
Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain."—Inf. C. I, 88.

Again we hear Dante eloquently conjuring this all-devouring beast when he enters into that walled space in his "Purgatory" and sees the innumerable souls who are purging away their sins of avarice. Hear his own words:

"Accurst be thou,
Inveterate wolf! whose gorge ingluts more prey,
Than every beast beside, yet is not fill'd;
So bottomless thy maw.—Ye spheres of heaven!
. . . . . when is the day
Of his appearing, for whom fate reserves
To chase her hence?"—Purg. C. XX, 10.

Let us cast a rapid glance over the punishments which Dante assigns to the avaricious in his "Hell" and in his "Purgatory," and then pass briefly in review the effects of greed on private and public individuals.

In his "Hell" Dante imprisons together the prodigal and the avaricious, the wasteful and the miserly, who meet in eternal and direful conflict, rolling immense weights, huge bags of coin, against each other with constant mutual upbraidings. The prodigal despitefully exclaim against the misers: "Why do ye hold on so fast?" And the misers bitterly answer: "Why do ye so wastefully cast away?"

See Inf. C. VII. *"Nor could all the gold that is beneath the moon purchase even rest for one of these toil-worn souls."* They are so disfigured by the foul stains which their sins have left upon them that none of them is recognizable. Vile and ignoble in life, ill-giving and ill-keeping, they deprived themselves of the beauteous world, the heaven of the poor, and live in eternal and fruitless strife. "How brief and vain," here exclaims Dante, "are the goods committed into Fortune's hands for which the human race keep such a coil!"

Passing over to the mountain of Purgatory we find the spirits of the greedy outstretched upon one of the ledges. There they lie prone, face downward, kissing the earth whose goods they so unreasonably loved; there are they prisoned, motionless, chained down and bound hand and foot, and there shall they tarry so long as it will please heaven's just Lord. Here Dante meets Pope Adrian V, who is atoning for his early doting upon those material goods which alienate the heart from God. Speaking of the sufferings here endured the spirit of the pontiff declares:

> "This mount inflicts
> No direr penalty."

Not only by thus describing the awful punishments which are visited upon the avaricious does Dante warn all mankind against covetousness, but also by showing the long train of evils that follow in the wake of greed, the large brood of vices which it brings forth, such as treasons, frauds, deceits, violence, murders, and insensibility to misery. He makes avarice the fruitful mother of liars, of thieves, of falsifiers, of peculators, and of usurers. We can readily realize what a powerful sermon Dante preaches still to the world by examin-

ing a few only of the deleterious effects of avarice as pointed out by this great Christian poet.

First, it petrifies the heart, makes it callous, hard, insensible, pitiless to such an extent even that man will betray his own kindred, and disgrace his own blood. In the circle of panderers and peculators in "Hell" Dante meets one Venedico, a Bolognese, who in his unbounded greed had heartlessly sold his own sister to the tyrant of Ferrara, Obizzo da Este. "Know then," confesses this monster to Dante, "that 'twas I who led fair Ghisola to do the Marquis' will." This man had well concealed his foul sin while on earth: Dante makes him confess it in "Hell"; and while he repugnantly avows his shameful deed he also tells Dante that the particular pit of torment in which he is cast is thronged with sinners of like description sent thither from Bologna, and assigns the cause: "Remember but our craving thirst for gold, if you need securer proof of what I say."

Again, transporting ourselves to the mountain of Purification we meet the shade of the magnanimous Hugh Capet, who brands with treachery and avarice many of his descendants. He sees a vision. He tells Dante: "I see that other (Charles II) who, after being defeated and taken prisoner, in view of obtaining money exposed his daughter upon the public market and bargained her off to an old Marquis, just as corsairs do with their slaves." Dante exclaims:

> "O Avarice!
> What canst thou more, who hast subdued our blood
> So wholly to thyself, that they feel no care
> Of their own flesh?"

Here too Dante records, among many other examples, that of Pygmalion, whose gluttonous thirst for gold had made him

traitor, robber, and parricide. We know, from the history of the past and of our own day and hour, that these and such revolting deeds are alas! no mere poet's dream. They are facts, all, unfortunately, too true and too common. Put instead of Venedico, Smith, instead of Ghisola, Jane, and instead of Bologna, Chicago or New York, and the shameful story is still true.

Shall we proceed farther? Would you see how the glitter of coin makes men lie and deceive? Then return to Dante's "Hell." Enter Malebolge, that dreadful waste of evil pits, and stand a moment beside the lake of boiling pitch. See that strong devil advance with rapid strides, holding by each haunch a sinner whom he dashes down below to a crowd of horned demons armed with forks.

> "'Ye of our bridge,' he cried, 'keen-taloned fiends,
> Lo, one of Santa Zita's elders! Him
> Whelm ye beneath, while I return for more:
> For that land hath store of such. All men are there,
> Except Bonturo, barterers; of "no"
> For lucre there an "aye" is quickly made.'"

It cannot be doubted that robbery and falsely charging others with the guilt thereof always have as their primal motive the illicit desire of money. Advance a little farther to the gulf where robbers are tormented by serpents. Here, one moment, Vanni Fucci of Pistoia stands aghast in that dire gullet and declares to us:

> "I am doomed thus low
> To dwell, for that the sacristy by me
> Was rifled of its goodly ornaments
> And with the guilt another falsely charged."

It were well for modern church-looters to look long and closely upon this picture and ponder on these words.

Needless to show further how Dante punishes those who counterfeit coin, those who perjure themselves, those who practice usury in order to satisfy their insatiable thirst for illicit gain.

These various effects are only worse when avarice fastens upon public personages; it makes kings lose their sense of justice and starts them out upon wars of conquest; it makes rulers lose their sense of reverence for sacred persons and emboldens them to grab the consecrated possessions of the Church. Dante shows us these princes laying their sacrilegious hands upon the very Vicar of Christ, who is led a captive in mockery and "'twixt living robbers doomed to bleed."

Is our own imperialism free from the taint of national greed? Let our conscript fathers think and answer.

Once Dante meets two shades in his "Hell," who ask him if courtesy and valor still dwell in Florence. Dante exclaims in reply:

> "An upstart multitude and *sudden gains*,
> Pride and excess, O Florence, have in thee
> Engendered, so that now in tears thou mournst."

Finally we may say that Dante reserves his bitterest condemnation of avarice for the clergy, who ought to be such close imitators of Christ's poverty. Woe to the followers of Simon Magus! No torment is too severe upon churchmen guilty of simony; upon those who in their rapacity do prostitute the holy things of God for gold and silver in adultery. All these simoniacs he plants head downward in rocky holes from which wild flames issue and lick the feet of the sinner. Horrible as this punishment is, Dante calls it right well merited.

Here among the sufferers he discovers Pope Nicholas III, whom he addresses — and only reverence for the keys (the Papal dignity) restrains him from severer speech than this:

> "Your avarice
> O'ercasts the world with mourning, under foot
> Treading the good, and raising bad men up.
> Of shepherds like to you, the Evangelist
> Was 'ware, when her who sits upon the waves,
> With kings in filthy whoredom he beheld."

Again, in another place ("Paradise," C. IX), Dante censures the avarice which has the fatal power of alluring both sheep and lambs into poisonous pastures and of "turning the shepherd into a wolf." And still further, in the heaven of Mars ("Paradise," C. XVIII), he indignantly inveighs against the covetousness of John XXII, whom he charges with excommunicating individuals for the sake of making them pay for revocation of that censure. The poet bitterly complains that this Pope's heart so cleaves to the florin that he cares no more for the spiritual welfare of the Church. If we suppose the fault was real, the condemnation of it is not a whit too severe.

Throughout his entire poem Dante never misses an opportunity of reminding the clergy of the danger of large possessions, even when these are rightly acquired, nor of pointing out how far these are a departure from the primitive poverty of apostolic times and men. And if he severely censured the clergy for undue love of riches, it was not that he loved churchmen less but that he loved the Church more. Nothing on earth in his mind is more exalted and sacred than the Church; and no men is he more ready to honor and revere than the representatives of Christ on earth. Why, even in

his "Hell" and in his "Purgatory," whereto he consigns certain Popes, he pays them instinctive respect. If he administers to them such bleeding castigation it is because their faults tarnish the sacred character they bear, and disgrace the Church which he loves so intensely.

Thus we have demonstrated how vividly and how truly Dante shows the loathsome turpitude of this vice of avarice. Verily, whether it appears in the ragged miser or is concealed in the pompous millionaire; whether it stalks boldly forth in the unmasked confidence man or the masked highwayman, or lies hidden in the heart of the lying swindler; whether it exists in a private citizen, in a prince, or in an ecclesiastic — it is always and everywhere the same abominable vice, full of dire menace for the present and future interests of individuals, full of dire menace for the well-being of society and the sacred institutions of state and Church.

CHAPTER XII.

DANTE'S MESSAGE ON POVERTY.

CONTENTS: — TYPES OF POVERTY PRAISED BY DANTE.— MOTIVES OF POVERTY AND LIBERALITY.— ST. FRANCIS PERFECT MODEL OF EVANGELICAL POVERTY.— PRESENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF THESE TEACHINGS.— LOVERS OF POVERTY ARE GREATEST LOVERS OF HUMANITY AND OF GOD.— DANTE WAS POOR.

Of all poets Dante is unquestionably the most sublimely moral. Knowing then, as he does, that it is not sufficient to point out the evilness of a course whereto nature vehemently inclines fallen man, he always accompanies his scathing denunciations of the vices he depicts, with examples of the opposite virtues, thus making it evident that what he teaches is not only reasonable and fitting, but also possible and even easy of execution.

How eloquently, for instance, the poet makes those marble sculptures of "Purgatory" exhort the souls of the proud to repent of their sins! Remember how vividly he places before their eyes and ours, in fact before the eyes of all those who are struggling to free themselves from the allurements of pride, all the most striking examples of humility. There they stand carved in the marble and so lifelike that we almost fancy they are speaking.

So, too, on the fifth ledge of "Purgatory" Dante makes

the spirits of the avaricious, who are there chained to the earth, recall the great models of poverty and thus spur themselves and us to more thorough repentance for a too fond love of riches. One of these spirits recalls the low roof of the wayside shelter where Christ was born; another praises Fabricius, that great Roman general and consul whom ages have admired for his poverty and integrity:

> "O good Fabricius! thou didst virtue choose
> With poverty, before great wealth with vice."

Another recalls the name of St. Nicholas (the original Santa Claus), that kindly-liberal, disinterested, and grandly charitable bishop, whose bounteous gifts dowered the three indigent maidens and thus saved their youthful prime unblemished. And thus, on and on, is repeated a long litany of invocations to those model men and women who have been equally illustrious for their poverty and their beneficence.

By picturing these ideals for our contemplation, Dante means to impress upon us the excellence of voluntary poverty, the excellence of liberality. The free renunciation of wealth and ease marks a strong and noble soul and reveals a truly rich and generous heart.

But contempt of the petty, perishable, and care-engendering goods of time may spring from natural motives, low or lofty, and hence those who thus elect poverty in preference to riches ever fall far below those models of Christian self-denial whose love of poverty is prompted by the highest, *i. e.*, by supernatural, motives. So, too, liberality may proceed from merely human or humane motives, and thus shines with far less lustre than that liberality which is enkindled from the ardent centre of all goodness, the divine bounty itself.

We must remember that it belongs to the art of great teachers to set the highest ideals before the eyes of their disciples, and to teach them to aim higher than the ordinary mark. Ideals cease to be such, cease to be sources of inspiration, when they become easily attainable.

Hence, in order to induce all men to moderate their desires in the matter of temporal goods, and this, too, for supernatural reasons, Dante employs the best effort of his genius to present in the loveliest colors the most illustrious models of evangelical poverty. What professed religious will not feel that he has indeed chosen the better part, and what unvowed layman will not loose the strings of his purse and let his captive soul fly out of it to better things, when he comes into almost personal contact with a man, who, though he could have lived in comfort, has embraced austerity; a man who, unlike the rich youth of the Gospel, has given up everything to follow Christ; a man who has actually exchanged all the goods of earth for those of heaven; a man who is so enamored of his poverty, of his destitution, that he calls it all the most endearing names, that he personifies it, that it becomes for him a living influence, becomes his lovely bride, his charming spouse, the lady of his heart, his all in all, the best inheritance which he can leave to his most beloved disciples.

Such a man Dante has shown us in the person of St. Francis. Ascend with the poet to the heaven of the sun and there, amidst those luminous spirits, hear one of these holy flames speak the eulogy of this ideally poor man. With consummate delicacy Dante puts this praise of the founder of the Fran-

ciscan order in the mouth of St. Thomas, who was a Dominican. The angelic orator commences his discourse by saying that Providence had raised up two great saints as escorts of the Church in that age, men who would defend her and keep her constant unto Him who had founded her in poverty and established her in order to be the teacher of truth. The one, Francis, he describes as "seraphic all in fervency;" the other, Dominic, as "a splendor of cherubic light." But it is of Francis that Thomas will speak; it is his poverty he will extol, his humility he will exalt, his charity he will applaud. He then tells us how, even early in life, his virtue had been edifying. Hear the saintly panegyrist speak the eulogy of Francis:

> "He was not yet much distant from his rising,
> When his good influence 'gan to bless the earth.
> A dame, to whom none openeth pleasure's gate
> More than to death, was, 'gainst his father's will,
> His stripling choice: and he did make her his
> Before the spiritual court, by nuptial bonds,
> And in his father's sight: from day to day
> Then loved her more devoutly."

Thomas then recalls how Poverty had been, for eleven hundred years and more, bereaved of her first husband, Christ; how all that time she had been slighted, ignored, and neglected, not having a single suitor — till Francis came. He then relates how the harmony of this happy twain, Poverty and Francis, edified and charmed hundreds, who bared their feet in pursuit of such sweet and heavenly peace.

> "Their concord and glad looks, wonder and love,
> And sweet regard gave birth to holy thoughts." . . .
> "O hidden riches! O prolific good!" . . .
> "Thenceforth goes he on his way,
> The father and the master, with his spouse,

And with that family whom now the cord
Girt humbly: nor did abjectness of heart
Weigh down his eyelids, for that he was son
Of Pietro Bernardone, and by men
In wondrous sort despised."

The Saintly Splendor next relates how marvelously the new order increased in numbers and how it was twice approved by Rome; he recalls how on the Alvernan rock Francis took from Christ the last signet (the stigmata), "which his limbs two years did carry," vivid marks and fitting recompense of his intense love. Finally, his death is recorded in these words:

"Then, the season came that he,
Who to such good had destined him, was pleased
To advance him to the meed, which he had earned
By his self-humbling; to his brotherhood,
As their just heritage, he gave in charge
His dearest lady; and enjoined their love
And faith to her; and, from her bosom, willed
His goodly spirit should move forth, returning
To its appointed kingdom; nor would have
His body laid upon another bier."

What a sublime example of poverty! What an all-compelling and beautifully consistent model of that much-neglected virtue Dante has put before the eyes of all ages!

Can those who look upon these lofty ideals, who read in the lives of those saints the lessons of Christ so well realized, still lack the generous will and courage to bear the discomforts attendant upon the changeful fortunes of human life? Can the rich, with such models before them, still grind the poor into abject poverty to enrich themselves the more; and can the poor envy Dives his riches? No! Upon our knees, let us all crave from heaven the boon that these sublime ex-

amples may efficaciously move us to the moderation which both reason and faith command.

In this moderation, rather than in profound theories of economics and sociology, will we find the solution of trusts and strikes. Organize and counter-organize, legislate and counter-legislate all we may, unless we become penetrated with the simple and elementary Christian truth that poverty is not a disgrace, that wealth is not the *summum bonum;* unless, if rich, we become liberal like Can Grande, "the sparkles of whose virtue shot forth in him in equal scorn of labors and of gold, whose bounty spread abroad so widely as not to let the tongues, e'en of his foes, be idle in praise thereof" ("Paradise," C. XVII); and, if poor, unless we resignedly submit to what fortune Providence metes out to us, and consume not our hearts in desires as unlawful as they are unsatisfying — then, I say, in spite of all, will trusts continue to be rapacious and strikers rush madly into greater, to avoid lesser evils. Save under the constraint of religious motives cupidity will ever make the earth a hell. The Christian idea and love of poverty alone can smooth difficulties and cause peace to reign both in the individual and in society. This is one of the most useful lessons Dante teaches our age.

There is just so much material wealth, and it cannot be possessed even in equal portions by all. Only spiritual goods can be shared or possessed in their entirety by all, and yet never suffer diminution. Pluck the reed of humility, for instance (as Dante did in "Purgatory"), and another straightway grows in its place. But not so with material goods; what one possesses another cannot have; and experience

demonstrates that all cannot long hold an equal quantity of wealth. Then some certainly must learn to do without the many things which they can never obtain or which they know not how to retain; and just as surely are those into whose hands Providence confides plenty obligated in the name of God to assist the indigent.

Again, man has just so much capacity and energy to love; if with all his energy he fills his heart with earthly goods, pins all his affections to wealth and money-making, he has none left for God or fellow-man. Right reason dictates he should distribute his affections upon various objects in due proportion, loving God above all things, and then other men as himself, and material wealth in its proper relation to himself, his fellow-creatures, and God. Thus we find that the best lovers of the Deity have been those who most loved mankind and least loved wealth. The more they emptied their hearts of the affections for material goods, the more room was made therein for love of human kind and of the Creator. What more thoroughgoing contemner of riches than St. Francis, and what more ardent lover of God and of every human being! What more poetic lover, even of the birds, whose songs were for him psalms of praise, and of the flowers, whose perfume was for him an incense of prayer mounting heavenward!

Dante beautifully and forcefully teaches the lesson of poverty. Moreover, he himself was a poor man not only by compulsion, but by choice. Before the confiscation of his goods he was poor in spirit, the blessedness whereof he also sings, the blessedness whereof is also shared by thousands of

excellent laymen to-day. There is strong evidence that Dante belonged to the third order of St. Francis.

> "I had a cord that braced my girdle round,
> Wherewith I erst had thought fast bound to take
> The painted leopard."[1]

This cord is generally interpreted to be the cord of the third order. Dante had entered this confraternity in early life so that, by the self-denial and various mortifications which the rule prescribed, he might obtain mastery over his unruly passions. It is this cord which Virgil casts down to the monster Geryon:

> "This when I had all
> Unloosened from me (so my master bade)
> I gathered up, and stretched it forth to him.
> Then to the right he turned, and from the brink
> Standing few paces distant, cast it down
> Into the deep abyss."

Thus it is that Dante throughout his grand poem shows himself a strong moral teacher, spiritually guided and enlightened. He is one of the world's greatest lights, whom we cannot too much heed, thank, admire, and follow. He seeks to detach men from meaner things, to uplift them to a higher plane of aspiration, and in words of fire and with flaming examples point out the sure way of righteousness. Like a courageous general, full of faith in the justice of the cause, he exemplifies his command to advance by marching at the head of his army, and thus inspires it with the enthusiasm of victory.

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[1] Inf. C. XIV, 106.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABOUT DeVERE AND FATHER SHEEHAN AND DANTE.

We were in the midst of Malebolge when one of the students, several days before the regular weekly lecture, accosted me, saying: "Perhaps that pit of boiling pitch will keep until next week. Why not tell us something about Aubrey de Vere and Father Sheehan? We see by the newspapers and magazines that Aubrey de Vere found great inspiration in Dante. It would be interesting to know why or how the Italian appealed to the mind of the Irish poet. Father Sheehan is deservedly *à la mode,* and we hear it said of him that in certain respects he is superior even to Dante." I promised to comply, and on lecture day we put temporary lids upon the caldrons of the devil's kitchen, to consider the timely subjects suggested.

Aubrey de Vere always referred to his conversion as the greatest event of his life. Once he said to a friend who visited him at his home in Curragh Chase, Ireland: "If there is any book that had more than any other to do with my conversion, it is Carey's translation of Dante." Now, we ask ourselves, by what in that book was he so powerfully moved? It seems to me that some souls of particularly fine fibre, of refined taste, and imbued with a love of the esthetic, make their way into the Church through the Gate Beautiful.

They are attracted to her perhaps not so much by the severe and exact verity of her doctrines as by the loveliness of them, by the luminous splendor of their truth, by the perfect and admirable symmetry with which these truths adjust themselves in one grand, harmonious whole. The elevation of the thoughts, the loftiness of the teachings, the clearness of the maxims, and the grace of the ceremonial of the Church; the grandeur of her cathedrals, the charms of her song, sculpture, and painting, the fairness of saintly lives which are but copies of the ideals of Catholic faith and morals — these various kinds of beauty, either singly or collectively, appeal to the esthetic mind, to lovers of the good, and often quite win them over to the ideals whose copies they have learned to admire.

De Vere found in Dante all these beauties of Catholic doctrine, Catholic ethics and Catholic life, profusely illustrated and set forth in fair, brilliant, and fadeless colors. His poetic fancy was charmed by it all, and he said to himself, no doubt: "If I wish to dwell in a world where, whithersoever I turn, my gaze shall be greeted by beauty, then I must enter the Catholic Church, the Church of Dante, the prince of Christian poets. Therein shall my soul revel in the contemplation of the beauty which it ever craves. Therein, like Dante, I shall ever see the beauty of divine justice, of divine mercy, of divine love. By clasping to my soul the sublime truths which have inspired Dante in his immortal song, his divine epic, by praying for the grace that converts clayey mortals into fair angels of light, I shall possess the secret of a noble life; I too shall get nearer to those snow-capped

summits wherefrom this Christian seer caught a glimpse of the unspeakable beauties of paradise; I too may mount to that exalted mountain top whereon beam the splendors of heaven when God, seeing our timid approach and our wistful eyes, sets ajar the golden gates and lets shine upon the enraptured gaze the tremulous rays of His glory."

De Vere prayed and he believed; and, laved in the waters of baptism, he entered the Church, which he cherished all the rest of his days. It was within her hallowed precincts that he found the inspiration of his best works. It was there he learned how to love the saints and, like Dante, to attune his lyre to sing their praises. In the sweet numbers of his "May Carols" he celebrated the glories of "The Lady" so dear to Irish hearts. In the breathing lines of the "Legends of St. Patrick" and "Inisfail" his religious and patriotic soul gave utterance to his love and admiration of the Irish saints. It was in the bosom of the Church that he rose to the estate of dramatic poet and achieved what only a Catholic poet could achieve, in the dramatic portrayal of St. Thomas à Becket. It was there he learned to delineate pagan pride and ambition in the person of Alexander the Great. Not until De Vere had read Dante did he abandon the minor poets whose smaller excellencies he had imitated; then he "struck out for himself upon an untrodden path lit up with supernatural light." Not until he had entered the Church through the reading of that grand poem, the "Divine Comedy" did his muse begin to sing of subjects far loftier than those which had hitherto been the theme of her song.

Beauty is the splendor of truth, and the "Divine Comedy" is Catholic truth vested in the charms of poetry. If it be not the peculiar beauty of Catholic faith as expressed by Dante that charmed Aubrey de Vere, then I confess that I do not know how or why the poem otherwise so potently wrought upon him. Certainly he had found in the small catechism the bare dogmatic and moral teachings of the Church.

The moral of this short sketch is that if we too thirst and hunger after beauty of the highest order; if we would learn to conceive high thoughts and to do noble deeds; if we would be schooled in the art of dressing thought in words of light and fire; if we would learn to fully appreciate the conquering power and the really fascinating and enrapturing beauty of our faith, we can select no better master than Dante. It is very possible that St. Thomas, with his monumental "Summa," may discourage some of us. His strict reasoning and the austere solidity of the great edifice of sacred doctrine which he raised may not particularly appeal to us. But surely we cannot object to being sung into knowledge and love of all the glorious truths of faith and into the sweet peace and the delicious ecstacy of righteousness by Beatrice in her sublime lullaby of divine wisdom and love. Let us then keep on hearkening to the mystic song.

I like both of Father Sheehan's novels and I hope he has not yet written his greatest one. I have read "My New Curate" and "Luke Delmege" with great delight. And what I particularly liked about these novels is their sweet and mild spirituality, which like a gentle balm heals the sore heart and like a vivifying tonic adds new and strong fibre to the

faltering will. Many a page in these books is as good as a chapter of Rodriguez, and has the effect as one of Thomas à Kempis. It is spirituality as in Dante, yet not quite as Dante's spirituality, which bounds from the earth — which he spurns — into realms of pure and glorious light. There is something in Dante's style that is severe, strenuous, and almost superhuman. Father Sheehan's style of spirituality is rather that of St. Francis, who does not so much condemn the poor things of this poor earth as he loves the rich treasures of heaven. With gentle suasion and not fierce threats or sledge-hammer arguments he loosens your grasp from the vanities of earth to fire your heart with the ardor of a seraph.

Father Sheehan in that quiet way teaches Ireland neither to sigh after material wealth nor to envy the material civilization of other countries. Not in this does national excellence consist; not in the development of industries, of commerce, of cities. But, if I have caught the idea rightly, the true greatness of Ireland consists in rearing up a people of undying Christian fortitude — for Ireland is to suffer; she, the innocent one, seems the providential victim offered up to atone for the iniquities of other nations and to bring about their conversion. To fill her destiny and reach the glories of Resurrection Day she needs all the virtues that one must possess in order to mount to the Calvary of vicarious expiation.

The characters in "My New Curate" and "Luke Delmege" which in a striking way symbolize this thought are *Alice Moylan* and *Barbara Wilson,* respectively. It is the visible miracle of the patient and even joyous sufferings of the once fair *Alice Moylan,* it is her unflagging constancy and her highminded resignation in bearing her physical dis-

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figurement and painful torture, that open the eyes of the infidel suitor of *Bittra Campion* — *Reginald Ormsby* — and win from heaven the grace that gently constrains him to acknowledge the divinity of a religion capable of producing such heroic souls. Now, if we admit that there is here any symbolism at all, *Alice Moylan* stands for Ireland, which too was once fair and bright in her days of national prosperity, but is now these seven centuries a standing miracle of national constancy to her faith in the midst of her many trials. *Ormsby,* the free thinker or agnostic, typifies any pagan nation, or perhaps England, which, it is to be hoped, may yet, like *Ormsby,* receive the baptism of Ireland's faith, and then the two, uniting in friendly embrace, will march to happier destinies.

The other personages who figure in the allegory range themselves around the central figure according to the order of their importance and in their own several meanings. The priests, for example, who comfort the afflicted young person, are living personifications of the Catholic religion, the true faith, which alone can inspire individual as well as national martyrdom. From their lips, which repeat the lessons of Christ, one learns what a glorious thing it is to suffer and to die for so sacred a cause as the salvation of a soul or the conversion of a nation.

We find in "Luke Delmege" the same thought, again woven in the tapestry of symbolism, but more vividly expressed by the story of the heaven-inspired self-immolation of *Barbara Wilson* in atonement for the scandalous life of her sinful brother. Now, make England, or any other country which has apostatized and has fallen in adoration before

the false gods of wealth, dominion and worldliness, stand for the pleasure-wrecked brother of the *Sister* penitent, and you have the situation in which Father Sheehan wishes to place Ireland and that sinful country. In the sermon on the taking of the vows *Father Delmege* explicitly says that the sacrificial function of Ireland is identical with that of *Sister Wilson.*

Father Sheehan points out how ill-fitting for guiding Ireland in the accomplishment of her supernatural vocation are those young priests who return from abroad, bringing with them the atmosphere of naturalism with which they have become saturated. Not until they have cast off these imported notions of material prosperity and dispelled from their view the mists which make them short-sighted, do they begin to understand the high worth of Ireland's poverty and the grandeur of their own apostolate.

Pursuing his comparison of Ireland and *Sister Wilson, Father Delmege* affirms that when Ireland too shall, like the *Sister,* have reached the glories of resurrection, she will look back with longing upon the agonies of her crucifixion and she will erect on her mountains permanent Calvaries of vicarious suffering for the entire race of men; for unto the end must human selfishness be atoned for by those who alone are capable of the divinest altruism.

It may occur to some that the same thing might be said of Poland in her relations with Russia and Germany. At any rate, Father Sheehan's idea of the providential role and destiny of Ireland is by no means a small idea, nor does it lack

originality. It is even more profound and elevated than it is original and large.

The presence of this symbolism in the works of Father Sheehan establishes a resemblance between him and Dante, whose "Divine Comedy," you know full well, teems with all kinds of figurative meanings. There is then, let us say, this certain resemblance. But when we have said this much, I think we have gone as far as we can prudently go in comparing the two authors. It is certainly no small credit for a man to be able to sustain comparison, even in one respect, with the greatest poet of the Christian ages.

When I read the opening and concluding lines of an otherwise justly appreciative criticism of "Luke Delmege" in a recent issue of the *Catholic World,* I could not come to any other conclusion than that the over-enthusiastic reviewer was lavishing extravagant praise. It is not in good taste to be excessively laudatory. This critic ends his notice with these words· "Father Sheehan has chosen the grandest of themes — a loftier 'Comedia' than Dante's — and with manifold gifts of the great Florentine for the treating of it." I do not concede that there can be a loftier theme than that of the "Divine Comedy," which is the emerging of humanity from out the quagmire of sin, its struggle up the hill of purification through suffering, and its final ascent to the starry spheres led by the lights of reason and faith. The *Catholic World* critic "thinks" it was Brother Azarias who said that there was left for human genius but one subject nobler than the scheme of the "Divine Comedy" and this subject is the human soul and its journey from sin to sanctity. If Brother Azarias ever said this, I doubt that he ever wrote it; and

if he ever said or wrote it, it is hard to see what he could have meant by it, for the journey of the human soul from sin to sanctity is precisely the theme of the "Divine Comedy."

Next, let us, after admitting a resemblance, point out some of the many differences between the work of Dante and that of Father Sheehan. If we take it that the meaning of the latter's books is that Ireland must atone for the misdeeds of other nations, it is clear that he can have meant to address himself but to that one nation. Not all nations are called to heroic self-immolation. Now, to write for the guidance of one nation to its particular destiny in a particular age is one thing, and this is what Father Sheehan does; to write for the guidance of mankind to its common end at all times and everywhere is quite another thing, and this is what Dante did. Even if we consider in "Luke Delmege" *Father Delmege* himself as a type or as the principal character of the story, and in the "Divine Comedy" Dante as the type or the central figure of the poem, we should not be long in discovering immense differences between the two personages. For instance, the one stands for the priesthood, the other for humanity in general, the one travels through two little islands and along the banks of the Rhine, the other visits three worlds. The scope of the "Divine Comedy," with its endless variety of characters, of events, of scenery, of allegories, of political, or philosophical, and theological teachings, is immeasurably larger than that of Father Sheehan's books, admirable as these are. From that huge mountain of mystic lore it is easy to quarry out large solid blocks and build fair

palaces such as Father Sheehan's novels. But for all that, the part does not equal, much less exceed, the whole. In one case we have a photograph of modern life, in the other a mosaic of the history of mankind.

Another difference, and that, too, not a minor one from the standpoint of literary technique or workmanship, is that Father Sheehan's words are prose — very good prose, and the "Divine Comedy" is poetry — most excellent poetry. There is, however, something in Father Sheehan's works which we do not find in Dante, and that is the bright and flashy wit which sparkles on almost every page. There are only two or three such flashes in Dante and even these are serious.

If we must have comparisons, and comparisons which come somewhat near exactitude, I think readers will find that there is considerable resemblance between these two books of Father Sheehan's and two similar books by Yves de Kerdec, entitled "Un Curé de Campagne" and "Un Curé de Canton," which appeared serially in *La Quinzaine* some four or five years ago, and have since been widely circulated. These works are also finely spiritual, speak of the devotedness and foibles of priests in France, deal with attempts at the introduction of new ideas in the ecclesiastical world and modern views of the patriotic abbé who must labor alike for the religious, social, political, and economic regeneration of France. And the writer, who is not a priest, but one of the foremost litterateurs of France, shows how far these attempts to improve that country by American methods were successful and in how many ways they seem doomed to remain ineffectual. It seems as though

the author of one set of these books caught at least some of his inspiration from the author of the other. * * * Some time after the publication of this criticism in *Mosher's Magazine,* Feb. 1902, I received the following personal letter from Father Sheehan, who, after expressing his thanks, said:

"It is a comfort to know that, in some circles at least, my books are regarded, not so much as a gallery of pictures, as literal and symbolical teachings of important Catholic truths. I think you have rightly interpreted my motives and meaning. There are, of course, in both recent books of mine very many ancillary and collateral issues; but the teaching of 'My New Curate' is the 'per crucem ad lucem,' 'per aspera ad astra' of Catholic truth; and the central idea of 'Luke Delmege' is the doctrine of vicarious atonement, which is the great dogma of Christianity. Running parallel with the life of *Barbara Wilson,* which exemplifies this, is that of *Luke Delmege,* the lesson of which is, that it would be a grave mistake for us, Irish priests, to attempt to engraft English ideas on our people, without, at the same time, taking into account our strange history and, what I believe to be, our supernatural destiny and vocation.

"I am not opposed to modern progress or to the material advancement of our country; but I aspire after the 'meliora charismata.' I think Ireland is a country apart, where the monastic idea is and must be the dominant one; as Dr. William Barry says, 'Every Irishman is a monk.' And as the Trappist and the Carthusian, in their mountain convents, suffer and pray for the toiling multitudes beneath them, so I should hope that Ireland, too, would offer her sorrows and suffrages for the more material races of the world.

"The chapter XLI, 'A Profession Sermon,' is really the key to the whole meaning of my book ("Luke Delmege") and might be taken as a preface."

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CHAPTER XIV.

SARDOU'S DANTE.

CONTENTS:—Sardou Not Qualified to Dramatize Dante.—His "Dante" is a Historical Falsehood and a Moral Monstrosity.

There are many reasons why Sardou's "Dante" is accounted by knowing critics a failure, a dramatic gold brick, a satire upon one of the greatest men that ever lived, and a travesty of history. Only Titans should try to move mountains; Sardou is a pigmy. Some years ago Tennyson, when asked by Irving for a play on Dante, declined the task, saying that it would take a Shakespeare to attempt the dramatization of Dante. Yes, Calderon or Shakespeare—but none less. Shakespeare was great enough for such a great theme. Besides he proved himself able to handle Catholic subjects and certainly could have done so creditably had he applied his genius to the dramatic presentation of Dante. But Sardou is too narrow and too prejudiced a mind for this. The Italian Carducci refused the honor of writing a poem to the name of Dante on the occasion of his centenary some years ago, urging as his reason that only a Catholic could worthily sing the praise of Dante. The author of the 'Hymn to Lucifer' felt that his own infidelity and the remoteness of his sympathies with the spiritually vibrant soul of the author of the Divine Comedy, altogether disqualified him from undertaking the

delicate office, and he sensibly declined. Sardou should have declined for this among many other reasons.

Sardou confessed he did not know much about Dante and his age. His play verifies his humiliating confession. His ignorance of the man he was writing about is another reason why he should not have inflicted his unspeakably wretched drama upon the unoffending public.

This drama is especially offensive, because it paints Dante as an immoral man and as a consummate hater of the Catholic church. This is a monstrous historical lie, with not a jot of truth, a foul calumny from beginning to end. But this peculiar presentation of Dante is what Sardou called the moral Dante! the type of liberty! Rather of libertinism, let us remark! For to place Dante as Sardou does in his play, in not only questionable, but criminal relation with several women is not only purely (or impurely) imaginary, fictitious and clean out of all connection with Dante's life, but out of all connection with the entire life of the age in which Dante lived. That type of man, who after all is none else than a Parisian roué, could be fitted only to the modern age of pagan degeneracy. As an attempt then to present a type, or to give us the moral Dante, Sardou's play is an egregious artistic mistake. For the idealizing of human character must always have some foundation on reality if it is to have the merit of being at least interesting.

Now it is established by such competent critics as Ozanam for instance, that Dante was a faithful husband. Therefore to represent him as a débauché, to bring out this as the most salient trait in the character and life of this great man is the

most flagrant calumny that could be committed this side of the Inferno. And of course Sardou could not befoul Dante without defiling several others. This Pia who appears in Purgatorio, C. V, 131, is a very pious and pathetic figure. This penitent spirit thus speaks to Dante, asking prayers from him.

"Ah! when thou to the world shalt be returned, and rested after thy long road, then remember me. I once was Pia. Sienna gave me life; Maremma took it from me. That he knows, who me with jewelled ring had first espoused." — Now these few lines are all there is in the Divine Comedy about this mysterious Pia. But is there anything in this sweet appeal for the alms-giving of a prayerful remembrance that suggests even remotely her culpable intimacy with Dante during her earthly life, that liaison round about which the entire Dante of Sardou is built? Not the least. The cynicism implied in the supposition that she who is pleading for prayers is Dante's own accomplice in the sin of infidelity, is simply monstrous and inconceivably revolting. It destroys all the poetic beauty of one of the most spiritual gems in the Divine Comedy. But evidently Sardou cares little for that. No doubt he pretends to have a right to imagine that Dante and Pia were the intimate friends in life which he makes them in his play. Now that we have established that it is preposterous to seek to make Dante out as having been in his life a profligate since it is known that he was a faithful husband, it is clear that what relations he may have had with Pia must have been above reproach.

About Pia herself commentators of the Divine Comedy say that she was remarkable for her beauty and grace and for her

misfortune. Italian archives mention that during her widowhood, after the death of her first husband, Tolemei, she was tenderly preoccupied with teaching her boys the art of reading. Having married a certain Nello dello Pietra, she became the victim of his insane and desperate jealousy. As he could not endure to have other men look upon her great beauty he shut himself up with her in a castle of Maremma, where they were both stifled to death by the pestilential air of that region. This is the view taken of her by Sestini in his romantic poem. Pia no doubt had her failings, and it is to expiate these that she is in purgatory singing the Miserere with those who met a violent death, and like them all pleads for the suffrages of the living. The distortion of this and other characters in Sardou's play is anything but artistic. For information on Pia read "Les Femmes dans l'Oeuvre de Dante," by Lucie Felix Faure.

Again Sardou's peculiar modern French bent of mind discloses itself in his undisguised attempt to picture Dante as the irreconcilable foe of the Catholic church. This really modern French free-thinker is the ideal Dante in Sardou's incurably irreligious mind. But here again the clown dramatist blunders. For in reality there never was either in his life or in his writings a more uncompromising lover of the Catholic church than Dante. His whole life was one of constant adherence to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic religion; and his immortal song, the Divine Comedy, which is nothing else than the Summa of St. Thomas set to the music of epic verse, is the solemn profession of his Catholic orthodoxy before the ages. That he consigns certain popes to hell is, as Ozanam puts it, only a proof of his intense, too intense love of the

papacy. The whole career of Dante then protests against the view taken of him by Sardou, who has therefore absolutely no foundation in fact for his ridiculous travesty. Of course in Sardou's mind Dante, who was a man of wit, *un homme d'esprit,* ought to have been a church hater. But he was just the opposite. It is too bad for Sardou and for his play that the facts connected with Dante's life and character offer so little ground for the peculiar idealization of him wrought by a batch of so-called French dramatists who are so much at home in pornography and liberalism. These are all pretty conclusive reasons why Sardou should not have written his play of Dante.

In simple truth, he should have been more regardful of the high standing of Irving in the dramatic world and he should have applied all his talents to the producing of a play that would be worthy of Irving and would call forth the very best efforts of this histronic genius. But it appears that Irving is disappointing in the title rôle of Sardou's sinister Dante farce.

Of course, out of sheer respect for the public, and regard for decency, if he could calculate the demoralizing effects that the production of such a drama could work upon the more or less uninformed and the easily misled, Sardou should not have written this unfortunate play; and for the same reason Irving should not disgrace himself by playing it. But, of course, Sardou cares little enough for what becomes of the morals of the young after they have witnessed his "moral" Dante; and the dramatic "profession" are more eager for "effects" than they are concerned about educating mankind to lofty and inspiring ideals of truth and righteousness.

Let me close these remarks with the expression of views of

eye witnesses of this drama, who, after commending the performance on the score of its spectacular merits, do not hesitate to condemn the play as a whole.

Norman Hapgood, dramatic critic for Collier's Weekly, says that this drama is preposterous; he calls it a hodge-podge of scenery, a mass of ill-assorted incidents, a complicated hash, etc., rendered endurable only by the acting of Irving. Sidney Brooks, in Harper's Weekly, after commending the effective appearance and posing of Irving as Dante, remarks that the final impression one takes away from the play is almost one of desecration and he feels as though a great theme had been splendidly vulgarized.

The most effective protest that an indignant public can make against such a play is to stay at home and let the actors, great or small, enact the outrageous farce before empty chairs which neither applaud nor pay round dollars.

CHAPTER XV.

IDEAL YOUTH.

CONTENTS: — EDUCATIVE VALUE OF IDEALS.—WAYS OF FORMING IDEALS.— FUNDAMENTAL DISPOSITIONS AND VIRTUES FOUND IN IDEAL YOUTH.— DANTE FURNISHES EXAMPLES OF PERFECT YOUTHS.— SPECIAL NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE OR REVERENCE FOR AMERICAN YOUTH. — COMPELLING POWER AND BEAUTY OF EXAMPLE.— DIVINE ASSISTANCE NEEDED.

Oh for one glimpse of youth's perfect exemplar as it exists in the divine mind! To see what in God's eyes constitutes the perfect youth! Oh for this supreme realization of the dream dreamt by those whose vocation it is to educate youth! And why? Not surely for the satisfying of idle curiosity, nor even for the personal delight of contemplation; but that, having set our eyes upon the ideal itself, we might labor directly and effectively to its fuller and fairer realization in the youth commited to us; that in the successful formation of them after this divinely beautiful pattern, that in this actual evolvement of intelligent and virtuous types of young men, there might be surer promise of strong, active, pure, honest, kind — perfect manhood, for the world all ages to come. But in our present condition we may not see God and live; nor could we see the divine ideas without viewing the too splendorous divine essence.

Yet we must not give up the search after the ideal of youth, more precious to us than golden fleece. For, if we do not succeed in arresting and fixing firmly before our mental eye an ideally perfect youth, clad in all those winsome qualities that make him a thing of physical and moral beauty and a source of perennial joy to all; if we do not often look up to this ideal, how can we ever hope to uplift the young above the lower planes of the real, the vulgar, the sordid, to which our common materiality and clamoring pecuniary interests ever drag us down?

Because man is an intellectual being, there is no more indispensable nor more active principle of real human progress than the possession of the divinest ideal. Would we attain perfection, then; would we reach a development that is in keeping with our dignity and the wondrous possibilities of our nature, we must begin by endowing ourselves with an ideal of the highest order, an ideal that will call forth our best and most strenuous efforts. Naught of value is here accomplished without mighty effort. Now, the more closely our ideals of human life and destiny correspond with the ideas of God, the loftier they are, the truer they are, and the more fecund, too, they are.

The ideal perfection and beauty of being and of action, may, there is no doubt, be revealed to man from on high. Prophets, whose eyes were supernaturally strengthened that they might look upon the radiant sun of truth, read in the divine mind, much more clearly and truly than even Plato the truths which they delivered to the world. Those seers who have peered into the all-knowing mind which holds the archetypical ideas of all things, have seen in their own finite,

though superhuman, way the infinite beauty of the supernal being, and have revealed to us, along with many mysteries, ideals of the perfect man and of perfect human conduct.

It is no doubt because our vision is obscured by the earth-dust of material loves or by the star-dust of vain speculation, that we are unable to see clearly and to appreciate fully the entrancing beauty of the human ideal divinely revealed to us. Yet even while thus losing sight of the divinely fashioned types of human perfection, men will form unto themselves models upon which they will shape their own lives. And it is not impossible for the unassisted human mind to rise from the consideration of really imperfect things to the conception of a comparatively perfect one. The Greeks did this. Any one who will but look around him and observe, and then reason a little, will soon find himself in possession of some final thought which is the expression of some perfect object; he will find himself in contemplation of an ideal which he has just finished and framed. Of course, the result of this process is far from the transcendental beauty of the ideal which the human mind grasps when that is clearly revealed to it from the luminous abode of all truth, beauty, and goodness. Yet, this offspring of the thinking soul has its dignity and is not to be despised. Practically men always seek in their efforts to realize some ideal, human or divine, and this constant endeavor to reach what is fancied to be perfection is a worship of the ideal. Now, when the illuminating beams of revelation do not penetrate and show forth the perfectest ideals, surely the pursuit after those ideals which unaided human reason conceives as highest is the next best thing and the most glorious pursuit. But we who are no longer pagans,

yet are the heirs of the rich findings of human reason; we upon whom has shone the full glory of Christ's truth and grace, surely we ought to be able to conjure up, by means of both reason and revelation, ideals of human life — in childhood, in youth, in manhood — ideals which, if realized, would not only rid earth of its greatest ills, but would make all men really worthy of consorting with angels.

Going through the processes of observation, abstraction, comparison, and analysis, let us see if we may not succeed in building up an ideal youth, a model youth, a type that all should seek to imitate. He must be strong, but not yet manly; he must remain youthful and give only promise of manly manhood. Now, what have we observed?

I have seen among many, let me say, one youth whose laughter was joyous as the music of angel harps. He was fashioned divinely fair, such as young saints are pictured by artists, to lend virtue a charm that will make her loved, admired, and embraced. His presence breathed purity, joy, intelligence. His eyes, blue as the heavens, reflected the serenity of a soul untouched by aught but baptismal grace, a soul that dwelled in an atmosphere fanned only by the angel wings of holy thought. They seemed the mirror of a soul that had looked upon God's face, a soul that knew only one beauty, a soul already so enamored of that beauty "ever ancient and ever new" that it seemed unconscious of the lesser beauties of earth and quite impervious to their seductive charms. His lips, the ruby lids of the jewel casket of his soul, opened but to say kind words and to bespeak the truths with which God flooded his soul. He was a saint? Perhaps. Was he all that he seemed? Will he be as valiant

in the midst of a conflict as he seems cherubic in God's sanctuary? Will he be unselfish, kind to those in distress, loyal to lowly duties, reverent toward the aged and the poor, pure in the midst of defilement, sober in the midst of orgies, honest in the midst of thievery? I love to think that his beautiful soul is so steeped in divine favor, so well tempered in grace that he will avoid every wrong and accomplish only goood.

Perhaps you have in your time noticed a youth — many had marked him, he was so full of fine, fresh, elastic vitality, with lustrous eye and mind, with graceful bearing, courteous mien, and ever-winsome amiability. But he was vain, he lacked that becoming reserve which disappears before an overweening estimate of one's good parts. This one will not do as the paragon we are looking for. Our gem must be flawless.

You have known another, then, who was becomingly modest, as healthfully pure as an Alpine breeze, of perfect physique too, and gentle as a maiden. But there seemed lacking in him that nerve, that inherent vitality, that strength which insures solidity to virtue.

And still another you have observed who had all other good qualities, but was not obedient. A fourth you knew who was arrayed in all the virtues except truthfulness; and still a fifth (and there were many of him) was possessed of all the splendid powers and graces of adolescence, but was unkind, indelicate, without pity or sympathy. We of course discard all cases of infatuation which do not permit the eye of its victim to descry even the most glaring faults in the object of its blind adoration. Here reason must be allowed to sway.

Now, then, if by an easy mental process we abstract all the diverse excellencies which we have observed in these several individual youths, and suppose all these various perfections unitedly existent in one person and in their highest degree, we shall have that sort of sublimated concept of youth which is called ideal youth. And comparing this ideal with really existent types of youth, we find that the youthful Christ was all this and more; we find this our exalted ideal realized even in many youthful saints canonized by the Church or by the spontaneous admiration of mankind.

Turn the magnifying glass of mental analysis upon this ideal, and you will easily discover what are those felicitous dispositions which enter into the composition of the perfect youth. Fix your eye upon him, and you will read in the pose, in the figure, in the eye, in the expressive lines of the lips, in the speechful countenance, and in every conceivable movement of this living picture, those easily discernible characteristics which are clearly written upon and adorn the ideal youth.

First amongst these shining marks of the perfect youth, marks too which distinguish his from other human ages, is obedience, respect, reverence, for the higher dignity of parents and elders, an ingenuous submissiveness to the rightful restraints imposed by them. This happy disposition of youth, obedience, is the potent root from which will grow and blossom forth filial piety and religion.

Another of the characteristics of youth is sweetness, mildness, amenity, or pleasing amiableness. This is the most

distinctive property of youth, and comes nearer than any other quality to being an innate disposition.

A third mark is modesty, which teaches the youth a moderate estimate of himself and a generous appreciation of others; makes vanity impossible; is attended by reserve, and is the guardian of that precious stainlessness, that physical and moral integrity, that pearl of great price, which is called personal purity.

Beauty is also one of the native features of youth. By this beauty is meant not so much the physical as the psychological symmetry of the person. "It consists," says Ozanam, "in the proportion and healthfulness of the parts of the body in conveying the impressions of the soul and in corresponding to its impulses." Beauty, then, which is ever order, means here a fine, clean adaptation of physical parts to psychic functions. It is not the mere superficial, skin-deep, ephemeral proportion of material parts, a Roman nose, a Greek forehead, a swanlike neck, a small foot, tapering fingers, a peachy complexion, and other such elements, amid which may be found the greatest psychic disorder and moral ugliness. While not agreeing with Lavater and such physiognomists, we need not deny that often in youth and in riper age physical or outward beauty is found to accompany and express the inward beauty of which we speak. The one does not include or exclude the other. But, inasmuch as we speak of the ideal beauty in youth, we should not consider that beauty whole, complete, perfect, did it not include both kinds of symmetry, the lower and the higher, the exterior and the interior.

Besides these four properties which may be considered as fundamental in the ideal youth, we shall not fail to observe others which are, as it were, his native ornaments. We have a moment ago refused a niche in ideality to a youth because he was insensible, unpiteous; our enshrined youth then should be distinguished for tenderness, for his delicate sensibility. He must alike be remarkable for his courtesy and his affability. He must above all be *loyal,* i. e., reliable, faithful to duty, honest, truthful. He will likewise of necessity be moderate and brave; he will be ruled by temperance and strength which will be like "the bridle and spur that reason employs in governing the appetites, as the rider governs a generous steed." Thus then is our ideal of youth outlined.

The artist who can catch these curves and seize such colors as will faithfully reproduce this ideal may break his pencil and throw away his brushes, for he shall have achieved a masterpiece which will serve, better than aught else he could paint, to elevate and delight mankind and to perpetuate his own fame unto all ages. Had Hoffman painted no other face than that of the youthful Christ among the Doctors, this one small bit of canvas would ever speak more eloquently than whole galleries and whole libraries, the divine wisdom which radiates from that God-illumined face, the sweetness and piety, and the perfect beauty indwelling in that most beautiful of the children of men.

Now that we have seen the finished mosaic of the ideal youth, we might wish to see how certain human characters met with in sacred and profane history and literature compare with this ideal. We might wish to examine more closely

the individual traits of this figure, the single tiny squares of this mosaic, and see to what extent and how perfectly the qualities which they symbolize are found realized in the human youths we read of and see around us.

Young Abel, young Joseph, young Tobias, we have often fancied, must have come very near to this faultless pattern; so too the youthful apostle John, the young martyrs Pancratius, Agnes, Lucia, Agatha, and many others, like Aloysius and Stanislaus, whose lives make the history of the Church an inspiration. In these you will always find realized, in a more or less pronounced way, that filial and religious piety, that loyalty, that sweetness, that modesty, that beauteous harmony, that tenderness, and that courageous strength, all of which are as so many features of our perfect youth.

Peer but a moment into the open folio of the Muse of History, and you will read there the records of such youths as the soldier-martyr Sebastian and the triumphantly chaste Thomas of Aquin. You will see him history herself becomes the inspiration of painting and sculpture. She will bid you look upon the pictures which her records of these young lives have inspired in such artists as Domenichino, Guido Reni, and others. Look upon the arrow-pierced victim and see with your own eyes how steadfastly a young soldier could endure cruel physical pain; look upon this other canvas and see how victoriously a very young man repulses the advances of a shameless woman. These historic pictures are lessons in heroic fortitude, in halo-crowned loyalty to conscience, in triumphant devotion to that personal purity which is the most precious and most beautiful adornment of youth.

It would not be difficult to find in profane literature examples of youths who in epic and dramatic poems not only serve the purposes of pleasing variety, but who are really splendid figures, personages that compel our admiration and inspire in us a desire to be like them. What more charming type of filial love and of constant loyalty than Shakespeare's *Cordelia?*

Who that has read the sad tale of Count Ugolino in the dreadful Tower of Famine was not struck with the heroic dutifulness and reverential love of those four youths, his sons, who, as they witnessed what they naturally supposed to be the agonies of hunger in their sire, fell at his feet, offering him their own famished bodies, conjuring him thus: "Eat of us, Father! thou gavest us these weeds of miserable flesh we wear; do thou strip them off from us again!" I know of no passage in the whole range of letters more strikingly illustrating this essential characteristic of the perfect youth, dutifulness, than these four or five lines of the so pathetic speech which Dante puts upon the lips of the unfortunate Ugolino in Canto XXXIII of the "Inferno." What splendid boys these youths must have been in their days and years of prosperity and sunny happiness, if in their so dire adversity they could behave so nobly! What fine strength, what bravery and staunch loyalty they must have been capable of in the enjoyment of their native health and freedom, if even when weakened by imprisonment, devoured by hunger, and oppressed by a most dreadful fate they were still capable of such sublime self-immolation!

Beatrice, in speaking of Dante's youth ("Purgatorio," XXXIII), represents him to us as one of those perfect types we love to contemplate. She says of him that through benign largess of heavenly graces he was "in the freshness of his being" so gifted virtually, that in him all better habits wonderfully thrived; and that, led by the light of her youthful eyes, he walked in uprightness. After paying him this deserved tribute she chides him for so soon abandoning her memory after she had disappeared from his mortal eyes.

Dante himself, whether purposely or not, has often selected this period of life to illustrate most vividly the very qualities of which we have spoken. For instance, he recalls the stoning of youthful Stephen, first martyr, by whom were displayed such courage, constancy, love of God, and forgiveness of his enemies.

Again Dante teaches that the generous resolves to espouse virginity and poverty are taken in youth. Thus Piccarda, a nun, speaks of her entrance into the community of St. Clara:

> "I from the world, to follow her, *when young*
> Escaped; and, in her vesture mantling me,
> Made promise of the way her sect enjoins."

So too it was, with St. Francis, that sun of Assisi; he was "not yet much distant from his rising," says Dante, when he by nuptial bonds and in his father's sight made poverty his bride.

And now, of all these attributes of the perfect youth, the greatest and most glorious is obedience or reverence,

"that synthesis of love and fear." It is not the opposite of the spontaneous and impish sauciness of children below their teens, but rather the opposite of that cool, calculated self-will which is the offspring of the budding self-consciousness of youth. It is already that "rationale obsequium," that reasoned-out and willing submission and respect rendered to superiors. How natural that youth in which full-blown pride has not yet set its cursed root should be obedient! And yet, how easy for this same naturally pliant youth to bend according to the wind that blows, to incline this way and that, like supplest willow, and follow the breath of the veering breezes of so-called liberty!

Whether it be due to wrong notions of liberty, or to hurtful precocity, or to defective education, or to all these together, it is generally granted that reverence is not one of the distinctive characteristics of American youth, and it is daily becoming less the distinctive feature of modern youth the world over. Respect for authority in the young is admittedly on the wane. For its rarity, it is the more admirable and admired when found. The excellence of this virtue is acknowledged even by those who will have none of it. The duty of preaching the loveliness and necessity of a virtue is not cancelled by the fast that this virtue happens to be unpopular. No matter how bad and false is the real, the ideal stands in its own serene altitude, ever unchangeably true and incorruptibly good.

Now, shall we leave it to the Chinese Minister to remind us of the high ideal which is to guide the Christian youth

of this land? Must it be a pagan and a stranger who will discover and place before us the beauty and sacredness of filial piety, who will wax eloquent in speaking of the honor due to parents, and, with true Chinese loyalty and enthusiasm, justify and extol ancestral worship? If it is right to learn from an enemy, let us then know from this Chinese, that deference towards parents is one of the most noble of natural virtues; and let us remember that our own stone tablets make this the most sacred and blessed of virtues, the most precious gem that adorns the crown of youth.

As our youth are intelligent, we may hope that by having set before them the models of obedience, they will come to think that obedience is the most becoming virtue of their age as well as the best policy. Let these intelligent youths but look upon that great and revered One, whose daily bread it was to do the will of his Father, and whose relations with His earthly parents are summed up in the sublimely significant words: "He was subject to them." Can they help conceiving a high regard for obedience when they see it adorning persons sacredly enshrined in the worshipful affection of mankind? When they see that it was through the obedience of the Handmaid of the Lord and through the obedience of her Jesus unto death that the stupendous work of redemption was achieved?

Let our boys and girls see these inspiring ideals; let them see them often and in their brightest colors. Surely, if our youth are to learn to think highly of their filial duties, it is hardly by keeping before their eyes Peck's Bad Boy or other types that are at the antipodes not only of perfection, but

of respectability, that we can hope to inspire in them that exquisite sense of reverence which would make every home the abode of peace and the safe asylum, nay the delightful retreat, of white-haired old age. Let them look upon the best models that the wide world affords. There is nothing too good for the American youth; nothing too exalted for his healthy ambition to seek to attain. Open the Bible; explore the old and modern epics; unlock history's casket; question Shakespeare and Dante, and paragons of obedience and of other virtues will spring around you on all sides as if by enchantment. Look upon these and see how fair they are, how lovely and yet dignified they appear in the rich livery of obedience.

Take Dante himself if you will, him whose youth was so praised by the wise Beatrice. Surely he was then the cream of perfection, since "in him all virtues wonderfully thrived" in those years. Though after reaching man's estate he lapsed through pride and forgetfulness from the high favor in which Beatrice had held him, yet even in his manhood years he never lost his deep sense of reverence. In his accounts of his visits to the spirit worlds, his meetings with angels and saints, with princes and shades and demons, you will always find him reverent, dignified, submissive. For Virgil, his guide, he has none but the most respectful and endearing names; he always reveres him and obeys him as his superior. Though Beatrice is met with often, yet she ever remains an object of worship in the so exalted dignity of the rôle assigned her. Not only never a word that distantly approaches familiarity, but ever new expressions of the most

chivalrous respect and loyalty. Her word for him is law; at her bidding he drinks of Lethe, drinks of Eunoe, and at her behest mounts with her to the stars. To every angel whom he meets upon the rising terraces of the purgatorian hill he pays reverence as to a representative of the Mighty Power. Even in hell, reverence for the keys, *i. e.,* for the tremendous spiritual power of the Papacy, restrains him from more severely upbraiding a pope whom he meets there. In "Purgatorio" he would fall at the feet of a pope doing expiation, and is gently prevented by the humble shade from giving this mark of respect. In the heaven of Mars he meets his ancestor Cacciaguida, and here Dante emphasizes the lesson of obedience and reverence; for he, being now a man, gives the young a shining example of these virtues. He does not dub this far-back ancestor "the old man," but addresses him in these respectful terms: "O plant . . . . revered and loved, who soarest," etc. "Say then, my honored stem." As soon as Dante perceives that the person with whom he is conversing is his great-great-grandsire, he changes his address from *thou* to *you,* a most delicate way, in Italian, of showing respect: "You are my sire, inspiring me with confidence to speak," and later on, this old crusader bids his kinsman fearlessly to say when he returns to earth all he has learned, nor fear to displease the mighty ones of this terrestrial orb. In the very next canto we find this command fulfilled to the letter, in what has often been considered one of the strongest arraignments of evil rule in all literature, a page which is the "Dies Iræ" of a score of kings sum-

moned before the Just Judge to answer for their iniquitous governing.

We might say that the entire "Divine Comedy" is one continuous and glorious victory of obedience: obedience to Virgil, obedience to Matilda, to Beatrice, to Cacciaguida, and other heavenly guides and inspirations. And certain it is, that the fame which had been promised to Dante as the reward of his compliance with the especial request of Cacciaguida did not fail to crown the obedient descendant of the valiant crusader.

There have been other instances of obedience and its rewards, perhaps more remarkable and glorious than this one of Dante's. Let them be brought to light often, and thus will this so indispensable virtue be more surely developed in youths.

Now it is certain that obedience, reverence, lovableness, joyousness, truthfulness, temperance, guilelessness, purity, and the many other happy dispositions of youth, whether innate or engrafted, must be cultivated by the will acting ever most effectually under the influence of divine assistance. This help must be prayed for, and used when obtained. These individual efforts of will seconded by grace will insure the happy blossoming of these good dispositions and their ultimate fructification. They will pass from the condition of unsteady dispositions to that of fixed habits, and become a second nature capable of the heroism admired in the youthful models whom we have mentioned. Again here Dante, through the voice of Beatrice, warns every youth against the

neglect or the abuse of the natural and supernatural endowments:

> "The more of kindly strength is in the soul,
> So much doth evil seed and lack of culture
> Mar it the more, and make it run to wildness."

Hence the greater guiltiness of those more richly gifted youths who fail to cultivate their beautiful talents.

If it is true that the decay of religion and of reverence precedes the decay of a people; if it is true that we are meriting more and more the reproach of irreligion and of discourteousness which strangers have leveled at us, then with what eager hope ought we to pray to the white-veiled grace of Religion and to the fair spirit of Reverence that they inspire in us anew that high regard for God, for authority, and for law, which is the basis of the loyalest patriotism; that they inspire in us that chivalrous gentleness and courtesy which is the badge of the truest civilization and of the most genuine manhood. Let then these sweet angels, Religion and Reverence, stand prominently forth before the young, and in their unveiled loveliness wave and unfold the clear legends of those virtues which must become the distinctive vesture of the perfect youth. Around and about these two, let other fair graces be gathered with their own emblems speaking of sweetness, of beauty, of modesty, of joy, of fearlessness, of tenderness. Let our youth look often upon this group; let them long contemplate it; let them hear its many voices appealing to all that is best in them; let them hearken to these inspiring messages; let them heed and love

these messages; and then they will be on the way to a fair realization of the ideal which we have seen drawn by those who know best the splendid possibilities of human nature.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY.

Let the students read individually the text of the "Divine Comedy." Carey's translation, edited by Oscar Kuhns, with a translation of the Vita Nuova (Crowell & Co., Boston) is recommended.

Brief preliminary explanations by the teacher on the most important features and especially on the more obscure points of the cantos to be read will be most profitable. To appoint different members of the class or literary club for the special treatment of separate cantos will prove a successful method.

To add interest to the work students can be assigned subjects for critical or historical essays, for imitation in prose or verse, for development, for speeches, debates or lectures, and for declamations or recitations,— the most dramatic passages being selected for this purpose.

The entire class may be required to write on the same subject, or better, each member may be assigned a particular subject for such thorough treatment as will entitle his essay or speech to be read or delivered before the class or literary society. For instance, one student may be directed to prepare "A Brief Sketch of Inferno;" another to write on "The Demons in Inferno;" a third, on "Imagination in Inferno;"

a fourth, on "The Moral Value of Inferno;" a fifth, on "Pathos in Inferno;" and thus on for other subjects. If the class is very numerous the same subject may be given to two or three students for competitive work.

Subjects should be given out at the very beginning of the course, each one then reading the text with a twofold purpose: to write well his own essay or speech, and to be prepared to critically appreciate the efforts of his classmates. It will be found profitable to appoint one of the students as censor or critic when these class essays are read or when the class exercises take the form of orations, debates or declamations. The literary productions which have been judged of superior merit will easily find their way into the school, academy or college journal or may be entered into a special classbook of Dante papers.

The following Outlines of subjects are submitted in view of assisting the students in the choice of matters upon which to write. These Outlines, being merely suggestive, are necessarily brief. Students will, of course, introduce in the treatment of these themes their own individual reflections and appreciations and the results of their readings. If the subjects are properly developed, a very readable essay, a beautiful poem, or an interesting discourse will be the result.

BRIEF SKETCH OF INFERNO.

1. Shape of hell: inverted cone: wound inflicted on earth by fall of Lucifer and rebel angels.

2. Plan of Inferno: Gate with inscription; nine circles from Limbo to Cocytus. Why nine?

3. Principal personages: Dante, Virgil, (three heavenly dames),

shades of poets, philosophers, king, queens, churchmen, etc., Francesca, Paolo, Brunetto Latini, Caiaphas, Mahomet, Ugolino, Brutus, Lucifer.

4. Name the principal demons, from the boatman Charon to the giant Antæus, and indicate their functions.

5. Explain Dante's exit from Hell with his guide "again to behold the stars."

[The same plan may be followed in writing mere sketches of "Purgatorio" or "Paradiso."]

DEMONS IN THE INFERNO.

Introductory remarks on the use of spiritual agencies in great epics; Homer, Virgil, etc.

Dante's demons are: (1) Finished types of perversity, *i. e.*, angels of light transformed into spirits of darkness.

2. Executors of punishment of sins they tempted men to commit. They are distributed through the various circles of the realm of woe and, under Lucifer, these outcasts of Heaven rule the diverse provinces of Hell.

Charon, Boatman of Acheron: C. III, 89-101-119.

Minos, Judge of Hell, by twist of his huge tail indicates to lost souls the circle to which they are doomed. C. XIII, 99.

Phlegyas, Boatman of Stygian pool that surrounds the flamy city of Dis. C. VIII, 18-23.

The Furies and Gorgons, monsters opposing Dante's entrance into Dis. C. VIII. Description of their action: C. VIII, 79. Note ireful gestures, scorn, insolence.

Demons rebuked by angel (the only gleam of celestial light piercing the dun gloom of Hell): C. IX. 78-100.

Minotaurs and centaurs. C. XII.

Geryon, genius of fraud; mark description: C. XVII, 1.

Seducers scourged by horned demons: C. XVIII, 35.

Malebolge's lake of boiling pitch, in which public peculators are punished, is guarded by devils: C. XXI, 27. Note description of one of these: C. XXI, 27-135. Malacoda, Barbariccia and a whole nest of fiends: C. XXI, passim.

Dramatic duel between Ciampolo, the barterer, and one of the winged demons: C. XXII, 120-140.

Dante pursued by demons: C. XXIII, 35-55.

Venomous and pestilent serpents torture robbers: C. XXIV.

Giants guard frozen pit of Cocytus. Antæus described: C. XXXI. 103.

Lucifer, eminent in beauty once, described: C. XXXIV, 15, 17; 26; 50, 120.

Conclusion: The ugliness and malice of Dante's demons.

Their monstrous perversion and their power for evil can but inspire us with disgust, horror for them and a salutary fear of sin, which alone can disfigure us also and bring us under their awful tyranny.

IMAGINATION IN THE INFERNO.

Introductory consideration:

What is imagination? Its rôle in works of art.

Plan: (1) Dante's use of this faculty. (2) Qualities of Dante's imagination.

1.

Dante's use of this faculty: He represents hell as a land of terror and gloom, where the very air is "fear-struck" and the light is "silent all"; — hail, snow, roaring winds, grim landscapes, gnarled trees, burning wastes, valleys of desolation overhung with ink-black clouds rent by lurid jets of red flame. The entire plan of hell with its circles, its demons, its wretched spirits, and its punishments is evidence of the constant use Dante makes of his imagination.

Look at details: Inscription on hell's gate; notice the happy blending of reason with imagination in this apt piece of literary mechanism. Artistic fitness of this legend and its effect upon the reader: C. III, 1-10.

Vivid description of hell's terrors. C. III, 20-30.

Quote passages from Limbo to Cocytus most strikingly representing woes of the damned, and passages which an artist (like Doré) would likely select as subjects for illustration.

Call attention to the almost endless *variety* of torments the poet has imagined — different for different classes of sinners. Examples. Advert also to the *suitableness* of these punishments to the kind of sinners to whom they are applied. Symbolism implied here.

Examples of this symbolical fitness: Carnal sinners "in whom reason by lust is swayed." C. V, 29-45. Tyrants who were given to bloodshed and rapine. C. XII, 49-54; 69-73; 102-103; 121-125. Suicides. C. XIII, 96-111.

2.

Characters of Dante's imagination: Brevity of his word pictures: "Limbo is a lamentable vale, a dread abyss, that joins a thunderous sound of plaints innumerable." Give other examples.

Vividness: "Red pinnacle of city of Dis, glowing through the dim immensity of gloom. "So vivid, so distinct, visible at once and forever; is an emblem of the whole genius of Dante," says Carlyle.

Truth, exactitude, inventiveness: Ruskin, in "Modern Painters," Vol. III, chapter 14, finds in Dante a landscape painter of no mean order. He admires the *definiteness* and *precision* of Dante's landscape painting and contrasts these qualities with Milton's fogginess and vagueness, and awards the palm to Dante, saying that his exact measuring of circles and ledges, this accurate engineering, etc., evinces greater power of imagination and the highest degree of invention. Dante's imagination is always swayed by reason, never runs wild.

Dante's performance is a proof that deep religious convictions, such as his belief in the existence of a real hell, are no extinguishers of the imagination.

DANTE ON SUICIDE.

Introduction: Alarming prevalence of suicide in our day: suicide clubs, occasional epidemics of suicide in large cities. Suicide is abhorrent to nature; it is a usurpation of God's exclusive right over our life, and an injury to society.

. . . . Dante's condemnation of suicide is clear and strong. See "Inferno" C. XIII. Note and describe the singular mode of punishment of suicides. Note the symbolism. Sentient trees. Having criminally freed themselves from temporal cares, they are eternally preyed upon by filthy harpies.

Explain Dante's introduction of Cato (a suicide) as guardian of the purlieus of purgatory. Purg. Cs. I and II.

Compare Dante's teachings on suicide with Sharkespeare's sundry comments on self-slaughter: Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be or not to be"; Brutus in "Julius Cæsar," act V.

Conclusion.

ETHICAL VALUE OF THE INFERNO.

The entire "Divine Comedy" is primarily a moral poem. It tends to make men better, leading them from the earth starward, Godward.

Dante is the greatest of moralizers among poets. "Paradiso" teaches us faith in God and love of God. Purgatory teaches us hope in God's mercy. "Inferno" teaches us fear of divine justice. Fear of God is the beginning of that wisdom which helps man to rightly order his life.

When is a book moral? Quote Southey's rule. In "Inferno," God is not represented as a despot wreaking savage vengeance upon helpless victims. Hell is the work of divine love and wisdom as well as of Justice. Inscription on hell's gate. C. III, 1.

This idea often repeated throughout "Inferno" Dante never exhibits maudlin sympathy upon viewing racking tortures, etc. "Here piety most doth show herself alive, when pity is dead." C. XX, 25.

He ever shows the punishment so justly fitting the heinousness of the crime that he makes the reader feel like exclaiming with Dante himself: "Abide thou then, thy punishment right well is merited." There is always a due proportion between the crime and its punishment. Hence punishment is decreed by justice, not by blinding anger. Schismatics, C. XXVIII, 135. As the enormity of crime increases so increases the severity of punishment. Draw examples from lower pits of hell.

Amid pictures of agonizing pain, he invites us to admire the Wisdom Supreme whose art allots a just meed to all. C. XIX, 10-14.

These visions of infernal torments which are the just consequences of unbridled passions are a powerful incentive to self restraint. Sighs, groans, shrieks, lamentations, blasphemous and despairing outcries of the wretched shades through the dismal realm. C. III, 21-29.

Naught in the matter presented or in the style of presenting it that could lessen our reverence for what is great and noble. Unlike Virgil, Tasso and Camoens, Dante is particularly chaste in the handling of such delicate subjects as the love story of Francesca and Paolo. He paints transgression as hateful, vice as horrible and repulsive as the punishment is sublimely terrible. Sin is not the result of irresistible fate, but the offspring of free will. No sickening sentimentality. He reproves sin in his friends like Francesca da Rimimi and Brunetto Latini.

Effects of sin further shown in the monstrous perversion of the demons. Types of malignant hate and fiendish cruelty, and in the misery of the human souls writhing in eternal torments.

Conclusion: The hell of Dante is a solemn warning; if heeded it can but help to save. As a sermon that portrays the hideousness of sin, that points out the dreadful punishment which awaits it and

thereby inspires a salutary fear of God's judgment is eminently moral, so also is Dante's "Inferno" moral.

THE POPES IN DANTE'S "INFERNO."

(1) Who they are. (2) Why Dante places them in hell. (3) What does the more sober judgment of history declare with regard to these popes? — See Ozanam's works on Dante; consult "History of Church" by Alzog, Rohrbacher, or Darras.

PATHOS IN THE INFERNO.

What is pathos?

Dante cannot be accused of lack of feeling. Carlyle says, "I suppose if ever pity, tender as mother's, was in the heart of any man, it was in Dante's."

Dante speaks of Beatrice, of the Madonna, and of Lucia with much tenderness and sweetness. C. II, 53-120.

A hard-hearted man is not often touched unto tears. Dante weeps over his own sad plight. C. I, 87. He weeps on hearing the sighs and groans of the damned. C. III.

Again he weeps at the first sight of Francesca, and after hearing the tragic story of her guilty love he falls like dead to the ground, fainting through very compassion. C. V.

Byron in reply to Schlegel's charges of Dante's lack of gentle feelings, exclaims, "Of gentle feelings! And Francesca da Rimini, and the father's feelings in Ugolino, and Beatrice and the Pia! Why, there is a gentleness in Dante above all gentleness, when he is tender. It is true that in treating of the Christian Hades or hell, there is not much scope for gentleness; but who but Dante could have introduced any gentleness at all into hell? Is there any in Milton's? No; and Dante's heaven is all love and glory and majesty."

He is overcome with pity at the sight of the punishment of soothsayers, and is rebuked by Virgil. C. XX,— *passim.*

The story of Ugolino in Canto XXXIII is all vibrant with pathos. Analyze this speech, pointing out its pathetic elements.

Conclude: The "Inferno" of Dante is not made up of the resentful, splenetic outpourings of genius gone mad; but it surprisingly echoes amid the most varied, the most tender of human emotions.

DEBATE.

Resolved, that Dante's Lucifer, as a poetic creation, is superior to Milton's Satan.

Pro:

Note the contrast which exists between these two creatures. Dante's Lucifer is a repulsive monster, type of perversity, of ugliness, etc., that inspires loathing and disgust. Milton's Satan, retaining much original beauty, is such an embodiment of heroic valor, that "do what you will, he demands a human sympathy." Jenkins' "Literature."

Whence this dissimilarity in picturing the same one being, whose characteristic feature is that of arch-enemy of God and man?

Different ages in which the two poets lived; different religious beliefs which they professed.

Different ends which the poets proposed to themselves in writing their respective works.

Dante's purpose was to teach a moral lesson: to make men live better lives, by inspiring them with a salutary dread and hatred of that most ferocious and ugly of the fallen angels, "eminent in beauty once." "*Corruptio optimi pessima*" is verified in the Lucifer of Dante. Compare Lucifer with other demons of "Inferno."

See description of Lucifer, C. XXXIV, Inf., and point out symbolic features of Lucifer's deformity. One turns from him with abhorrence, disgust and a salutary dread of sin and its visible and palpable consequences. This is strongly moral.

Milton's aim was to give the world a great epic poem; not to teach men to live better; but to show in good English, how two great intellectual powers, God and Satan, contended for the mastery of the world.

Gorgeous *mise-en-scene;* Satan is the skilled commander of a formidable army of fallen angels. Sonorous eloquence — but without moral tone. Quote the proud rebel's harangue to the myriads of immortal spirits in pandemonium. Note effect on fellow rebels. Contrast the freedom of movement and of speech of Satan with Lucifer's silent captivity in the frozen pit of Cocytus. Contrast also the dignity of Satan in the magnificent hall of Milton's hell with the abjectness of Lucifer in the darksome bottom of hell, weighed down by all there is of iniquity in the world.

Satan's heroic valor appears from the perilous nature of his undertaking. Quote from sundry speeches in "Paradise Lost."

His skill as commander is seen from the manner in which he exhorts and counts his well-arrayed battalions.

Finally, from Milton's description of Satan this fallen angel is still clad in much of his heavenly beauty; celestial youth smiles in his face and suitable grace is diffused in every limb; his curly, flowing hair is adorned with a coronet and his many colored plumes are sprinkled with gold, etc. All the tinsel and glitter of spectacular theatricals are here displayed, nay, even all the splendor of mediæval pageants and tournaments. Do what you will you must admire Milton's beautiful devil.

All this was no doubt necessary to Milton's purpose. But the fact remains that his Satan wins admiration and sympathy.

Conclusion: Whatever may be the questionable merits of Milton's Satan as a pure fiction of the imagination it is certain that from the moral standpoint Dante's Lucifer is an incomparably superior creation.

Contra:

Dante's Lucifer, though an original creation, constitutes one of the defective features of the "Divine Comedy." It is inartistic; it is unscriptural, and not strongly impressive from the moral standpoint. Milton's Satan is the opposite of all these.

Dante's Lucifer is a tame, passive creature, immovably fixed in ice: Dante and Virgil creep up his back and find their exit from out "Inferno" without being molested. A most grotesque creature, repulsive, disgusting only; not awe-inspiring, but merely ridiculous. This tame monster is not only hideous, but it is unscriptural. Revelation paints the devil as a roaring lion ever going about seeking whom he may devour; the prince of liars, the ubiquitous tempter, etc.

The predominant sentiment which Dante's Lucifer inspires is not a strong deterrent from vice. Mere disgust is not lasting.

Milton's Satan is more artistic, truer to reality. Proud archangel clad in shattered majesty: giant whose face bears scars of thunder. Arrogant pride and dire revenge sit in his eyes; remorse and care are in his heart. Rules over fallen hosts. His flight through chaos as described by Milton is full of grandeur. (Comment upon this passage from "Paradise Lost.") Impossible to represent Satan without some tinge of goodness unless one is ready to admit with Manichæus an essential principle of evil.

Milton's Satan comes nearer to the devil of Scriptures than does Dante's Lucifer. Scripture represents Satan as the prince of hell and of this world; the very personification of pride, ambition and malice;

the sworn enemy of God and man; possessing awful power for afflicting man, etc. It is as such Milton portrays him. He makes Satan a mighty monarch arrayed in gaudy splendor and dreadful power for evil. His marshalling of spirit hosts to storm heaven and especially to devastate the earth and harm mankind is true to his real character.

Milton may, like Dante and many other great poets, have had as a secondary motive the desire of delighting the world with a great epic; but his nobler and primary purpose was also to make men better as is evident from the opening pages of "Paradise Lost." (Quote.)

His Satan's great power can inspire but terror of the highest degree; his ceaseless activity and his resourcefulness can but inspire constant fear; his malice can but inspire, not sympathy, but dread and hatred. Morally, then Satan is stronger than Lucifer.

Conclusion: Milton's Satan is a more perfect poetical creation than Dante's Lucifer.

ETERNITY OF DANTE'S HELL.

Introduction: Indefectibility of rewards and perpetuity of punishments are conditions of adequate sanction of natural law. Special arguments furnished by reason to prove the eternity of punishment. See Sanseverino's "Philosophia Scholastica: Anthropologia," p. 288, 289; or consult any manual of Christian philosophy on immortality of soul or sanction of natural law. Revelation is clear on the eternity of that hell-fire to which the wicked are condemned with Lucifer and his angels. Scripture passim. Dante embodies in his "Inferno" his Christian convictions and his distinctly scholastic philosophical tenets. Resting upon right reason and revelation he makes his hell eternal.

Division: This can be proved, first, from what is said in "Inferno" itself, and, second, from what is said of "Inferno" in other parts of "Divine Comedy." (*a*) Inscription on hell's portal sounds key-note of eternity. Quote solemn, awful words C. III, 1-10. Comment. (*b*) In "Inferno," passim: Virgil leads Dante through an "eternal" space where shall be heard the despairing shrieks of damned spirits lost for "aye", sighs that make the "eternal" air tremble; where spirits are lashed by "eternal" rain, heavy and cold, "unchanging forever." Spirits speak of their sufferings as everlasting: The violent curse the blind lust and foolish wrath that goaded them on in their brief temporal life and now makes

them so wretched in the "eternal" life — the space, the pain, the fire, the cold, the very air of Dante's hell are eternal.

In "Purgatorio": Cato, guard of ante-purgatory, seeing Dante and Virgil, as though escaped from Limbo, exclaims: "How forth from the 'eternal' prison house have you fled? Are the 'firm' statutes of the dread abode broken or new laws ordained in heaven" Purg. C. I, 40. Plato and the Stagyrite are mentioned as lingering in "eternal" grief. Virgil greets spirits in purgatory as one exiled to "everlasting" punishment.

In "Paradiso" the eternity of hell is several times affirmed. See references to Justinian (Brutus and Cassius) and to Trajan. See canto XV, 8, on "endless" grief of hell.

Conclusion: Stoic apathy is unreasonable. Passions, emotions have a divine purpose. Reasonable fear of God's judgments is beginning of wisdom. Who destroys or lessens man's reasonable dread of God's chastisement cuts strong fibre of moral energy; who intensifies this fear powerfully arms man against himself and all powers of evil and sets him on the way to higher life. Dante, by making hell, not only a dreadful outstanding reality, but an eternal reality, adds mightily to those motives which contribute toward Godly human life.

STYLE OF INFERNO.

Though the "Divine Comedy" bears the unmistakable stamp of the idealist, yet Inferno is realistic. Dante was pointed out by the people as the man who had been in hell. Dante is intensely in earnest; he complains that language is powerless to express the smallest part of the horrors he saw. (Quote passages.) Brevity, boldness and vividness of the pictures he draws. (Give examples.) He compares scenes he witnessed in hell with well known places and events. (Cite instances.) Definiteness of these descriptions. Reasonable proportion between various species of sin and their punishment. (Illustrate.) Likelihood. The persons in hell are real and not imaginary. Very human traits of these lost souls. Mention other elements of Dante's realism.

Conclusion.

LECTURE ON INFERNO.

I.

Introduction:

Purpose of Inferno. Shape of hell and its division into nine circles. Principal characters.

1. Its literary merits: vividness, realism, intensity, variety of scene; defects: grotesqueness of some personages, etc. Quote passages.

2. Pathos. Quote passages from Francesca's story; Carlyle's and Byron's appreciation. Passages from Ugolino's speech. Other instances of deep emotion on part of Dante. (Quote.)

3. Ethical side of Inferno. Law, liberty, sanction, virtue, vice; fear of punishment is a strong deterrent from sin; Inferno inspires salutary fear of punishment sin entails. This punishment is severe; yet it is just. It is eternal. Inscription on hell's portal. Dante never speaks of sin *à la* Zola. Warning against reading dangerous books implied in Francesca's confession. Wolfran Von Eschenback says Dante is the first Christian poet whose whole system of thought is colored in every fibre by a purely Christian theology. Ruskin says Dante is the central man of the world as representing in perfect balance the imagination, the moral and intellectual faculties all at their highest degree.

PURGATORIO.

DANTE'S ANGELS.

Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, etc., admit the existence of benficent spirits, intermediate beings between God and man; the hierarchical order of being would be incomplete without them. Dante, with a fine sense of proportion, introduces angels in his world-embracing poem. In Inferno, C. IX, an angel appears to the pilgrim poets before the fiend-guarded gates of Dis, a bearer of divine assistance. His luminous beauty contrasted with the monstrous ugliness of the black demons: his power for good superior to their power for evil; he rebukes the insolence of the demons. Effects of his words and actions. . . . . As demons preside over circles of hell and divers orders of angels rule in the different heavens, so in Purgatorio do angels appear as ministers of grace on the ascending terraces of its mountain. Their chief functions in Purgatorio are to guide and guard the souls. As Inferno has its demon boatman, so Purgatorio

has its angel pilot who leads the soul-laden bark across the ocean to shores of mount. Quote remarkably beautiful description of angel: Purg. C. II, 25, 45. . . . So have we in this life angel guides. Symbolism. Again two angels descend from heaven in answer to prayers of spirits to Mary, to guard the vale against the serpent. Purg. C. VIII, 24, 36. Note symbolism of words and of colors of angels' wings. Angels are our guardians and defenders against Satan. C. IX, 90: Priestly dignity and function of angel sitting upon the threshold of purgatory's gate. Symbolism of marble steps, of angel's garb, of two keys, seven p's inscribed on Dante's forehead. Scars of sins are effaced from Dante's front by angels' wings: C. XII, 70, 93. This sacramental function is repeated for six of the p's. Angel of dazzling brightness shows easy way of ascent, *i. e.*, guides: C. XV, 27, 35. So angels teach us to avoid difficulties and to surmount obstacles. See also C. XXIV, 135, 140; C. XXVII, 6, 14. Angels share in triumph of love and wisdom as represented by Beatrice whom they bring from heaven upon a cloud of roses. C. XXX. At first the sight of angels so dazzles Dante that he is unable to withstand the gaze; but according as he ascends and the blots of sin are erased from his brow he acquires strength to look upon these heavenly splendors; thus too the more we are freed from sin and become spiritualized the more we can enjoy the contemplation of spiritual beauty.

Conclusion: Reverence we ought to hold for angels on account of their dignity; confidence in them on account of their power; admiration for them on account of their beauty; love for them on account of their goodness.

IMITATION.

Plan for prose or verse exercise in imitation: Read last cantos of "Purgatory," carefully noting beautiful description of terrestrial paradise in canto XXVIII; groups of symbolical personages, objects, and animals in the splendid pageant of canto XXIX; descent and speches of Beatrice in canto XXX and XXXI. Note likewise the striking symbolism developed in the two remaining cantos.

Write an original sketch in which certain allegorical figures will appear. For example: An American soldier, wounded, dreams of the glory of his country; visits the abode of Liberty; in this vast and magnificent place he sees advancing a long procession: Elders (Pilgrim Fathers); thirteen children (Colonies); forty-five maidens in white robes, blue girdles and red caps (States); car of state, its

two wheels Independence and Constitution; attending it are genius of law, of jurisprudence, the spirits of loyalty, patriotism, symbolizing Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, etc.

Amid the acclamations of this multitude an angelic maid, Liberty, descends from on high into the car. She wears symbolical colors of the republic. Her speech to the president: brief review of past glories of America. Confession of president. The Goddess of Liberty having alighted from the car stands surrounded by the diverse personages that accompany her. Car is overshadowed by magnificent tree, luxuriant with foliage and loaded with fruit. (Tree of Industry or Prosperity.) Suddenly a dragon (Secession) issues from between the two wheels of chariot, and making rent in its bottom, flees away. Harpies descend from tree and perch upon wheels and sides of car: (Political corruption, boodlerism, peculation, venality, extravagance, etc.) Shameless woman ridiculously begemmed (Plutocracy) mounts into chariot; a small-headed giant (Trusts or Imperialism) caresses her. Liberty weeps; all her attendants raise so loud a protest that the bad woman flees and with her disappear the giants and the harpies. Thereafter in far off distance, above this glorious assemblage is seen floating a vision of a stately structure (National Capitol); upon its proud dome floats a flag of red and white bars and star-dotted blue, which stirs the soldier with such intense joy that it awakens him from his dream.

The same plan may be adapted to the condition of an Irish patriot dreaming of the glories of Ireland; the thirty-two counties taking the place of the states; symbolical personages would represent the music and poetry of Ireland, her scholars and saints, her kings and statesmen, etc. Erin herself, crowned with shamrock and vested in the green robe of hope, would be the chief personage, holding court in the reconstructed palaces of Tara's hill. In her address she speaks of her glories and trials; of causes of national woe, from without and from within. Destiny: (See Father Sheehan's "Luke Delmege," chapter containing sermon on religious profession.)

Again one may imagine himself as a searcher after knowledge in the realm of books; or as a young person about to decide upon a vocation in life or a profession, the world on one side with all its bright prospects and on the other the steep and rugged path that leads to the sun-illumined summits of Christian perfection in religious life. The two could be separated by a narrow but deep river symbolical of detachment, etc.

N. B.— Imagination must be allowed scope. Reason will dictate

the use of symbolism. Personages should not be named; but their identity must be apparent in the colors they wear, their traits, their functions, their discourse, etc. For example, the personage meant to stand for Washington could be described in Dante's own style, as "visibly written 'The Father of His Country!'" Nor should symbolical objects be labeled. For instance, the symbolism of the Wheels of the Car of State could be signified thus: Let one wheel be a beautifully crystallized marble flake with seven deep veins stretching from the center to the circumference. (These are evidently the Articles of the Constitution.) They are linked to one another at different intervals by fifteen slender but clear transverse threads (the Amendments). The other wheel might be described as adorned with mosaics representing an assembly of most potent, grave and reverent seigniors who are signing an important document.

IMAGINATION IN PURGATORIO.

Dante's imagination is not exhausted after drawing the dreadful pictures of the underworld. He evokes another picture world, lightsome, graceful, vivid. The nature of the subject, a mountain in mid-ocean, peopled with souls and angels, visited by Beatrice and other heavenly apparitions, is well adapted for display of imaginative power. Dante is a great artist: he faithfully copies nature; he idealizes nature, representing scenes, object and action as more perfect than they are in reality; he creates new scenes and characters, making new combinations of objects, colors, characters and actions.

1. Dante copies nature in expressing sentiments: C. XIII, 47, 52; in representing actions, C. XIII, 91, 94; C. XVI, 9, 14; C. XXIV, 100, 110; in describing persons, C. XXIII, 19, 24; personal traits, C. XXVI, 60, 65; C. VIII, 73, 78. Descriptions of places, of grass, of rivers, mountain scenery, etc., are often throughout "Purgatorio" copied from the Apennines and from Italian landscape. Cite examples.

2. Dante idealizes the natural. The physical properties of persons and things are spiritualized. He himself becomes lighter and lighter according as he passes through the successive processes of purification. He gradually acquires power to gaze upon the dazzling brilliancy of the angels who are the guards of purgatory's terraces. The whole mountain "which healeth him who climbs" (C. XIII, 1, 3) shakes for very joy when a soul has finished its purification. The material elements, water, air, winds are subject to the control

of angels: C. II, 33, 44; C. V, 96, 127. The dews, the rivers, the fire, the very weeds of purgatory are endowed with a spiritually cleansing power. For spiritualization of bodies see C. II, 36, 45: Within the angel's small bark "a hundred spirits and more there sat." See also Casella, C. II, 72, 80. Motion idealized, C. V, 36, 41. By motion of wings angels efface the scars of sin from Dante's forehead. Songs and prayers and speeches of the souls. Angels. Terrestrial paradise is an ideally beautiful place: forest, grass, rivers, air, light, colors, breezes, fragrances, music and pageant of unequalled splendor: from C. XXVIII to end of "Purgatorio."

3. Dante's imagery is no less remarkable for its newness, its freshness and grace than for its graphic fidelity and sober brevity: description of sunrise and appearance of angel pilot in C. II. Spirit voices chanting messages of penitence, of joy, of prayer and of exultation (passim). Marble walls sculptured into speechful statuary, C. X. The ground is wrought over with imagery exhibiting instances of pride, C. XII. Dante's novel use of dreams and visions, C. IX, 7, 40; C. XVII, 19, 49; C. XIX, 6, 32; C. XV, 83.

Novelty of Dante's own situation: a real body in a world of spirits who marvel at his shadow: C. XXVI, 5, 8. He himself at first wonders at the absence of Virgil's shadow: C. III, 16, 32.

The contemplation of these new and idealized scenes is not only a profitable exercise for the imagination, for the formation of the taste of him who beholds; it is also a source of genuine pleasure. Not only the variety pleases, but the sort of beauty objected to our view elevates. And this, according to Aristotle, is the primal object of art.

PRAYER IN PURGATORIO.

Prayer is one of the elements of the spirituality and moral beauty of this part of the poem. Appreciation of the value of prayer by sages and poets. Homer and Virgil make heroes pray before heroic deeds. Prayer wins man means to higher life. Fitness here. Spirits are themselves on way to better life; their condition a symbol of man's state on earth. Spirits pray for suffrages of the living; the prayers of the living bring relief to the souls in purgatory. Various sorts of prayer in Purgatorio:

1. Spirits ask for the prayers of the living. Manfred: C. III, 131, 141; Belacqua: C. IV, 126, 131; Jacopo: C. V, 65, 73; Nino: C. VIII, 70, 73. Dante's doubt as to the efficacy of prayer and Virgil's answer: C. VI, 29-49.

2. Consistently with Dante's principles, the spirits confess they are benefited by prayers of the living: Forese, C. XXIII, 77, 83. Two angels sent by Mary in answer to prayer of spirits: C. VIII, 36.

3. Prayers of thanksgiving: The "In exitu Israel": C. II, 45; the "Te Deum": C. IX, 131, 138.

Prayers of petition: "Salve Regina": C. VII, 82; "Te Lucis Ante," C. VIII, 14; the "Our Father": C. XI, 1, 24. Quote and comment.

Prayers of joy: *v. g.*, when a spirit has finished its purification, all spirits sing Glory to God in the Highest: C. XX, 131; even the mountain trembles: C. XXI, 43, 62; C. XXIII, 128.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW OF PURGATORIO.

1. What is the main idea of Purgatorio?
2. What are the chief elements of its spirituality?
3. What is the twofold rôle of angels in it?
4. What is Dante's treatment of prayer?
5. What are Purgatorio's merit as to imagery?
6. What about its realism?
7. How does it treat the fine arts? (Music, poetry, sculpture, painting.)
8. Why is Cato, the suicide, the guardian of the mountain?
9. What is the double rôle of Beatrice?
10. Judgment on women of Dante's time: Nella, Giovanna, Matilda, Beatrice. Women of Florence; Gentucca.

LITERARY EXCELLENCE OF PARADISO.

Relation of "Paradiso" to other portion of the "Divine Comedy" in point of literary merit. Mention features of the work of imagination in this part; use of passion, love, joy, delight, etc. Attractive charms of ideal and moral beauty. Perfection of details. Analysis of these in particular, examples: Exquisitely delicate figure in description of translation of Beatrice from Mars to Jupiter: C. XVIII, 48, 64. Note in this canto also the spirit fires writing the legend "Diligite Justitiam." Brilliancy of this figure; variety of colors; gracefulness of motion; sweetness of song. Artful way of preaching justice to mankind, to rulers especially. Study the very original and complicated figure of the eagle in cantos XIX and XX. Note the formation of the eagle, the speeches of the beak and music of its flute-like neck, the symbolism of the eye. Condemnation of injustice and apotheosis of justice.

Give other instances of masterly figures. Conclusion: The ingenuity and creative power of Dante's imagination are here excellently displayed; the emotions are not neglected. Both imagination and heart are under the sway of reason, and present to the mind a picture of heaven which it is a delight to contemplate even from afar.

FLIRTS IN HEAVEN.

The heaven of Venus, spoken of in cantos VIII and IX of "Paradiso," is sacred to the affectionate will of man. Here we meet Cunizza, famous for her amorous adventures, because overcome by the influence of this star; but who repenting, deserved to drink of Lethe's obliterating wave. Here also shines Falco of Marseilles and the courtesan of Jericho.

Many readers wonder why Dante places these persons in heaven.

Cunizza was in youth fond of dress and of expensive pleasures; she was four times married; she figures in love intrigues with the poet Sordello while wife of Count Richard of Verona; next she married Knight Bossio of Trevisa; then she married a gentleman of Verona, and fourthly and finally she married the astrologer of her brother Ezzolino. (See "Les Femmes dans l'oeuvre de Dante," by Lucie Felix Faure.)

She ended her life in Florence, where Dante, then a boy, saw her as a very old lady, and heard of her generously setting her slaves at liberty. She was spoken of as a kindly, compassionate, merciful lady, especially towards the victims of her brother's violence and cruelty.

She is chosen by Dante as a symbol of human frailty saved through repentance and good works. (See "La Poesie du Ciel," by Abbé Rousselière.)

Falco is the personification of the mediæval troubadour whose songs echo in plaintive strain his ever unrequited loves. He had sung love to the beautiful Alazais, wife of the viscount of Marseilles, had sung to the viscount's equally fair sister, sung to Eudoxia, sister of Emperor Commenus. Failing everywhere in his love intrigues he retired to a Cistercian monastery.

Dante places Rahab in heaven because (as Scripture says) like the later Mary Magdalen, from a public sinner she became a convert to the faith and law of the true God. She shines in heaven as a trophy to declare the mighty conquest that Christ won with his transpierced palms.

There is nothing singular or queer, much less monstrous, as Voltaire would have it, in Dante's classification of the damned or elect souls. Sin is a human weakness, deserving hell, but irreparable only when the sinner is and remains impenitent. Christ has won us the possibility of atonement through repentance. Innocence is recovered when sin has thus been atoned for.

How consoling for all who know and feel the native weakness of humanity, to know also the redeeming power of repentance; to know that for every human frailty God has a corresponding mercy, and to see in the light clad souls of the heaven of Venus that those who learn to rise from their falls may climb to thrones in the starry spheres.

N. B.—Compare persons in Venus with the spirits in Purg. C. XXV and C. XXVI, and with those in Inferno, C. V.

ESSAY OR ORATION ON THE DIVINE COMEDY.

Introduction: To attain highest intellectual culture and moral excellence is a consummation so devoutly to be wished that institutions of learning cannot be too well equipped, the oldest teachers cannot be too learned, the best books cannot be too good for the really noble and eager mind. Need of discrimination in our age of many books and of educational and religious fads. The "Divine Comedy" has stood the test of time; the verdict of the ages and of the sages is that the "Divine Comedy" is a thing of moral, poetic and intellectual beauty.

1. The moral beauty of the "Divine Comedy" consists in that it strongly and suavely teaches justice, courage, faith, hope, love, prayer, reverence, purity, honesty, justice, moderation, temperance, gentleness, pity, and all the virtues that make man Godlike and grand. In solemn accents it reproves vice and shows how horrid it is in the sight of God and man, in the deep pits of hell where pride, anger, gluttony, anger, lust and the whole brood of vices writhe in unspeakably painful anguish, in an eternal agony. The "Divine Comedy" is a thing of spiritual beauty; purgatory is the song of the sacredest hopes, as paradise is the song of the holiest loves of humanity. The persons. Beatrice is the symbol of wisdom and love. Symbolism throughout. Speechful types of all virtues: saints.

2. The poetic beauty of the "Divine Comedy" appears in the endless variety of splendid word pictures throughout its three divisions. Freshness and newness of Dante's imagination. Passions lend warmth to the poetic beauty of the poem, which teems with the most dramatic scenes and most touching episodes. Pathos, fine sen-

timent, tender feelings, mingled with ineradicable resentment in narratives of Francesca and Count Ugolino. Indignation and hatred in Dante's apostrophe to Florence (Purg.). Splendidly literary and strikingly dramatic account of Buonconte's own death (Purg. V). Special literary merits of Paradise: the handling of such momentous subjects in verse. The fiery legend of Justice; the flamy eagle. See cantos XIX and XX.

3. The "Divine Comedy" is the song of Christian faith with accompaniment upon the golden harp of Christian philosophy. It is the poetical expression of the efforts made by Christianity to explain itself. It is theology. Wonderful deal of learning, sacred and profane — all marvelously blended into one grand whole. Scholasticism set to music. Teachings of Plato and Aristotle, of Aquinas and Bonaventure are here embodied in one harmonious strain. Beatrice, the beautiful, the wise, the good, is teacher. Beauty is splendor of truth. Beatrice is a beautiful teacher of truth.

Conclusion: "Divine Comedy" deserves to be classed among the aristocracy of books because it develops our noblest faculties, *viz.*, the imagination, the will and the intellect. We should therefore consider ourselves privileged when, reading the "Divine Comedy," we sit in presence of such a capable instructor.

GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE "DIVINE COMEDY."

Introductory remarks on the matter of the "Divine Comedy," *i. e.*, Who are its persons? — Dante himself, representing humanity in diverse relations to self, neighbor and God.

Beatrice, perfect type of loveliness and inspired teacher of divine science.

Madonna, Lucia, types of divine assistance.

Matilda, type of loyalty to Church.

Christ, builder of Church.

Apostles and doctors.

Clergy: Popes, bishops, priests.

Laity: Rulers and subjects; Jews, pagans, philosophers, scientists, poets, the poor, the rich, the learned, the ignorant,— the entire visible world of men.

Angels, demons, saints and God: The entire invisible world.

In what form will he cast all this matter? In what situations will he arrange all these persons? Dante casts his poem in the form of a vision in which he beholds humanity punished by divine justice,

purified by divine mercy and rewarded by divine goodness. As Beatrice is a teacher of divine science and an example of all the virtues and as all intelligent beings are to be averted from evil and directed toward good by knowledge of the truth and examples of the virtues, *she* will be the main inspiration of the poem.

The form of the poem must have primarily been in his mind, and accounts for his introduction of such varied material.

This form itself grew with Dante and gradually evolved itself.

Dante as a boy met Beatrice; he admired and loved her; a youth his affection increased; he celebrated her uncommon perfections in ardent poems: "Vita Nuova." Later, after her death, he, in an ode, promises to say of her what had never been said of any woman.

Now he studied seriously and began to definitely plan his greater song.

In looking over the field of sacred and profane literature Dante found not a few examples which suggested the form of his poem and which helped its complete evolution.

Visions of Fra Alberico (12th century) and of Waldkin (11th century), of St. Brendan related in Monk Henry's book: St. Patrick's "Purgatory." Scripture: St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem. St. Paul wrapt to the third heaven. Dives in hell. Purgatory, a prison house.

But more perfect in a literary way and more suggestive was the "Tesoretto" of Brunetto Latini, who had been Dante's preceptor. "Inferno," canto XV. Point out analogies between the "Tesoretto" and the "Divine Comedy." Point out differences.

Conclude: Though Dante derived help and inspiration from many sources, yet the "Divine Comedy" both in its richness of materials and in the imposing grandeur of its form is the work of his own genius.

WOMEN COMPARED.

Compare great heroines of literature, like Helen, Dido, Cleopatra, Laura, Armida, Cordelia and others with Beatrice.

Compare so-called "modern" woman with those types of excellent women presented to us in "Divine Comedy": Matilda, Lea, Rachel, Giovanna, Piccarda, Rebecca, Lucia, Beatrice. Compare them also with Francesca, Gentucca, Sapia and certain Florentine ladies not very remarkable for modesty: Purg. C. XXIII, 90, 95.

See "Les Femmes dans l'oeuvre de Dante," by Lucie Felix Faure. (Perin & Cie, Paris.)

ELOQUENCE OF THE "DIVINE COMEDY."

Introduction: What is eloquence?

1. In the "Divine Comedy" there are passages which might wring pity from hearts of stone. Ugolino's entire speech in Inferno, C. XXXIII, 4-74. Critical appreciation of this passage: furious rage of the count gnawing out Ruggieri's brains. Paternal anguish caused by the sight of his starving children. Sublime filial piety of the children; their pitiful death. Father's agony of grief.

2. There are passages which stir the soul to the very depths of its being: For instance, see passage in Purg. C. V, 92, 127, describing Buonconto's tragic death. Note the dramatic elements of this recital. Quote. There are everywhere in the work striking apostrophes, appealing supplications, applause of the victories of virtue, horrifying recitals of the disastrous consequences of sin. In high and dignified speech Dante rouses all the passions; for instance in his apostrophe to Italy: Purg., C. VI, 75-154. Observe here the apt and well sustained metaphor concluding with a telling climax in the effective allusion to the words of Christ upon the cross. Throughout the entire speech there is fire, vehemence, wrath, indignation at Albert's neglect, pity for Italy, sympathy for Rome, irony and contempt for Florence and her corrupt politicians. Dante's patriotism becomes righteously indignant. He, however, in the end strikes a note of hope — expressing trust in the Providence that rules the affairs of men.

3. And this brings us to say, in the third place, that the "Divine Comedy" teems with passages which excite within us exalted feelings, noble aspirations, and impel us with irresistible force to the ceaseless pursuit of high and grand ideals. Consult speeches on the excellence of religious life. Parad., C. V.; on poverty, Parad., C. XI.

An eloquent prayer is an example of the most exquisite sort of human speech. Dante's own prayer for justice: Parad., C. XVIII. St. Bernard's prayer to the Virgin: Parad., XXXIII. Point out oratorical merits of this invocation: apt praise of the Virgin's exalted station; expression of confidence in her goodness and power; petition for favor of God's vision. Note the effect of this prayer.

Conclude: Chatham says if one desires to learn eloquence he must study the Bible and Dante.

DIDACTIC ASPECT OF DANTE'S POETRY.

True poetry is not the product of the imagination alone. It is not

the offspring of a crazed brain. Horace declares that poetry must come from a man well endowed with the power of reasoning, of investigating, of discovering; a man with a keen appreciation of what is really excellent; a man who moreover has a free command of fanciful illustration and elegant expression. Horace prescribes this: "Let poems, while they teach and admonish us, delight us. Let them improve while they please us." That Dante displays throughout his great poem a most wonderful power of imagination and a most keen sensibility together with force and grace of expression cannot be doubted. And it is equally clear that he evinces great good sense, broad learning and deep philosophy.

It is belittling the importance and lowering the dignity of literature to say with certain modern critics (*v. g.*, Posnett, Palgrave, etc.) that the function of literature in prose or verse is to give pleasure to the greatest possible number of the nation rather than instruction and practical effects. These gentlemen declare that works of literature are the handicraft of the imagination rather than of reflection. As they mean practically to exclude reason from works of art or to reduce its share in such productions to a very insignificant minimum, we must say that they have against them both common sense and the common consent of all the great oracles of literature, Shelley, Byron, Sidney, Mathew Arnold and Horace, whose sentiment Byron thus expresses:

> "That bard for all is fit
> Who mingles well instruction with his wit."

These same modern critics have against them the great makers of the great masterpieces of literature, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, who are living examples of Horace's better rule for writing well: "Scribendi recte sapre est et principium et fons."

How could Dante thus have held the attention of the ages if while amusing human kind with wonderful images of fancied worlds, he had not at the same time proclaimed to the world most important truths touching such subjects as man, the soul, God and destiny?

The teachings of Dante on these momentous subjects are of unquestionable philosophic soundness and in accord with the strictest theological orthodoxy.

The very plan of the "Divine Comedy" was a feat from which reason could hardly be absent. It necessarily involved the settling of what Dante believed to be the destiny of man. Hence he makes

the punishment of wilful and unwept sin the theme of the "Inferno"; salvation through penance, the burthen of "Purgatorio"; the reward of virtue, the subject of the "Paradiso." Dante's teaching on man: his body, its formation and union with the soul: Purg., XXV, 38 et seq.; its resurrection, Parad., C. VII, 141-144.

The soul, its nature: a spiritual substance; its origin: it is from God. Purg., C. XXV, 69-77.

Soul's destiny: it is immortal: Purg., C. XXV, 81 et seq. These passages in canto XXV, Purg., also speak of the unity or oneness of the human soul, its intellective and other powers.

On freedom of will: Parad., C. V, 18-24.

Philosophy of love: Purg., C. XVII and C. XVIII, and Parad., C. XXVI.

Virtues and vices: Dante a great moral teacher.

Ideals of human life: his women, like Beatrice, Lucia, the Madonna, Matilda, are types of wisdom, and loveliness, of gentleness, modesty, helpfulness, kindness, and unswerving loyalty.

His youths, like the sons of Ugolino, are models of heroic dutifulness and reverence.

His men: the saints are exemplars of moral strength, of justice, of courage and are ever guided by reason and faith.

Teachings on society: Parad. C. VIII; on law and authority: Purg. XVI.

Dante's teachings on God: He is the Primal Motor or cause of all things, eternal and immense, "In whom *sunt* and *est* combined we note." Parad. XXIV. "Where centres everywhere and everywhen." Parad. XXXIX. "Not circumscribed and all things circumscribing." Parad. XIV.

Wisdom, justice, power, love, infinite all: Inscription on Hell's gate. Inf. C. III. Dante's profession of faith in God: "In one God I believe," etc. Parad. XXIV, ibidem, the Trinity, also Parad. XXXIII, the three circles of light. Incarnation, and Redemption: Parad. C. XIII.

Enough has been said to prove that Dante has freighted his verse with weighty instruction. Yet such is the wealth of fanciful illustration throughout his work that it never grows dull or heavy. Macaulay has called the Divine Comedy "the finest didactic poem in any language."

CHARACTER OF DANTE.

Introductory remarks on character as a combination of traits that makes one easily discernible from the millions. Essentials of the

truly grand character. "Eternal wrath," says Byron, "was written on his brow and where he looked, gloom pervaded space." Consider Dante the man, the scholar, the citizen, the Christian.

1. Dante as child was solitary and eager for learning; early he meets Beatrice. As a youth his one passion is that love of Beatrice which saves him from vulgar faults. As husband of Gemma Donati: we can infer from the story of Francesca how highly Dante thought of conjugal fidelity; and from the story of Ugolino we can judge that Dante was a tender lover of his own children.

2. As a scholar: his learning was as profound as it was universal. An earnest, grave and deep student. He made himself almost blind reading philosophy. He studied at Bologna, Paris, Oxford, became deeply versed in theology, literature, in physical, social, and political sciences. His friends: poets, artists, statesmen, and scholars.

3. As citizen Dante was distinguished for the high views he held on liberty and justice; his service to Florence as prior of the city and as a soldier. As passionately fond of Florence as he was pitilessly severe in condemning her crimes. His efforts in behalf of Florence and Italy with Henry VII. He was no slave of political parties; now a Guelph, now a Ghibelline. Proud exile. "Ungrateful Florence, Dante sleeps afar."

4. Dante was a consistent Christian. The "Divine Comedy" is a profession of his faith, of his hopes and loves before the ages. An ardent lover of the church; an uncompromising hater of ecclesiastical abuses, simony, nepotism, ambition. He considers the Christian saints as ideals of human conduct. Francis, Dominic, etc. He bore his many ills with much fortitude; man of prayer; lived a practical Catholic and died a member of the third order of St. Francis.

Conclusion: Singular grandeur and solemn beauty of this character. A life full of pathetic and tragic situations. What a life to dramatize! But what a profanation is Sardou's Dante!

DANTE AS A NATIONAL POET

Although by reason of the universal interest of his theme, God, man, eternity, heaven, hell, evil, good, love and science, Dante is a world-poet, yet in his peculiar handling of his world-wide subject, he is a national poet, *i. e.* he is Italian. The Divine Comedy is a picture book of Italian scenery: rivers, mountains, valleys, skies, etc. Great events of the Italian history are dramatized in the Divine Comedy. Italian personages are diversely immortalized; some are held up to the admiration of mankind, like Francis of Assisi, Thomas

of Aquin, etc.; others to universal reprobation. Dante as soldier, had fought for Florence. His rebuke of Florence and his pity for Rome and Italy show him a patriot.

DEFECTS OF DANTE'S QUALITIES.

1. His brevity sometimes gives rise to obscurity. Examples passim.

2. His realism sometimes degenerates into grotesqueness. Examples: Description of Lucifer, Inferno C. XXXIV, 27, 75; Adam, Paradiso C. XXVI, 95, 107.

3. His definiteness produces fatigue. Why? Point out other defects. Mythology? Excessive severity toward ecclesiastical personages due to his religious and political ideals.

VIRGIL'S INFLUENCE UPON DANTE.

1. Dante chooses Virgil for his guide through Inferno and Purgatorio. Why? Inf. C. I, 64, Kuhn's note. Purg. C. XXII, 64, 74.

2. What did Virgil's work suggest to Dante's in regard to thought and plan of "Divine Comedy"? In regard to personages: their epic grandeur compared.

3. In regard to style, see Dante's acknowledgment, Inf. C. I, 75-85. Compare passages of Æneid with passages of Divine Comedy.

THE END.

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